DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LITERATURE

MASTERS RESEARCH REPORT

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Asijiki: Black Women in the Economic Freedom Fighters, Owning Space, Building a Movement

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the partial requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Department of African Literature

March 2017

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Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the partial requirements of the Degree of Masters in African Literature, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signature…… **Date: 15 March 2017**

Simamkele Dlakavu

Acknowledgements

To Mama and Tata, enkosi ngothando lwenu. I thank God daily for blessing me ngani. Ndinithanda ngentliziyo yam yonke. To my brothers and sisters, sho bo rhasi! Ndinithanda laweyi!

Thank you to the entire African Literature Department at Wits, you are a home that I sadly discovered late in my academic journey and you are a home that I never want to leave. I will always return for visits. I've been in many departments at Wits and YOU are the best that Wits has to offer!

Dr Danai Mupotsa, you are brilliant! You are kind and generous! At times I felt so undeserving of your awesomeness, thank you for helping me through the finish line. We did it!!! I will always treasure the bond I formed with you. Your methodology of supervision and the community you created for us was LEADERSHIP! Prof Pumla Gqola, Dr Barbara Boswell, Dr Siphokazi Magadla and Gqobani Qambela, your mentorship and guidance contributed immensely to my work, please know that I appreciated very conversation we had. When I couldn't afford a "professional editor", guardian angels came to my rescue, they were: Lihle Ngcobozi, Pumla Bonani, and Dr Shepard Mpofu, ndiyabulela comrades. Zinhle Manzini, you were the perfect study buddy and sister, we did this together, halaaala!

To my organisation, the Economic Freedom Fighters and its leaders, thank you for trusting me with such intimate parts of our movement. There were times where I felt rage and disappointment because of some my findings. And then there were moments I felt complete joy, pride, hope and a debilitating anxiety. The later emotions were caused by Black women leaders of the EFF who agreed to be in conversation with me for the purposes of this inquiry. You moved me beyond words. Thank you Nokulunga Primrose Sonti! Thank you Hlengiwe Hlophe! Thank you Veronica Mente! Thank you Naledi Chirwa! Thank you Mandisa Mashego! Thank you Leigh-Ann Mathys! I am so proud to be led by you Commissars. You are kind, brilliant, committed, strategic, and simply magic. I felt a huge responsibly towards you in drafting this thesis. Thank you to the three anonymous women leaders of the EFF who agreed to be in conversation with me #Asijiki

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ASGISA	Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa
BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
CCT	Central Command Team
CGE	South African Commission for Gender Equality
CIC	Commander in Chief
COPE	Congress of the People
DP	Deputy President
DSG	Deputy Secretary General
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
JPP	Johannesburg People's Pride
MK	Umkhonto WeSizwe
MP	Member of Parliament
NDP	National Development Plan
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PCT	Provincial Command Team
RCT	Regional Command Team
SNI	September National Imbizo
TANU	Tanzania African National Union
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDM	United Democratic Party
UNIP	United National Independence Party

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1. Introduction and Theoretical Framework

South Africa was introduced to the new political formation called the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) on the 12th of July in 2013. In a press conference dominated by a significant majority of Black[1] men wearing red berets, it's Commander and Chief (CIC), Julius Malema remarked:

> We will take over South Africa and we will usher in the demands of our people. We will fight against white supremacy and we will fight for restoration of Black African dignity. Our people should feel confident again that this is their soil. (*Mail & Guardian* 2013)

In this study, I am interested in the current political moments that Black South Africans are living through. I begin from the basis of a political understanding which recognises that the negotiated settlement in the early 1990's failed to significantly alter the socio-economic conditions of the majority of Black South Africans. This political outlook acknowledges that white supremacy and Black indignity, as echoed by Malema in the aforementioned statement, still defines the South African reality. The EFF has crafted itself as the political party that is committed to undoing the historical legacy of slavery, colonialism and apartheid which continue to define racialised economic inequality in contemporary South Africa. Since 2013, the EFF has grown to secure its position as the third largest political party in South Africa and is the official opposition party in two provinces in the country, the North West and Limpopo (IEC 2014). The EFF has also described itself as a leader in Black left politics in the country, as party spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi expressed: "we [the EFF] are the only people in the left of South African politics who can quantify our support to be way beyond a million; no one else can do that" (2015).In their entry into South African politics, the EFF has been critiqued within left formations as an "essentially a populist movement, prone to undemocratic practices and therefore not to be counted as part of a new left movement" (Nieftagodien 2015: 448).

In its proclamation as the political champion that will usher in economic liberation for Black South Africans who are the faces of poverty, unemployment and landlessness, the

[1] The word 'Black' is capitalized within this research report for political reasons inspired by the Black Consciousness Movement. 'Black' is utilized to describe all racialized oppressed groups under apartheid South Africa. It is also a symbol for Black solidarity

EFF has also been questioned and critiqued by Black Feminist scholars in the country such as Siphokazi Magadla (2014) and Shireen Hassim (2016) for its inability to centre a gendered approach or methodology in its policies and political actions. Magadla puts forward that women in the EFF are " visible in their domestic worker attire, the female leaders of the EFF have only been appearing in the background of escapades initiated by their male comrades that have awaken parliament, as a site of political theatre" (2015). Furthermore, Magadla posed a question to the party, asking: "has the EFF leadership demonstrated something different besides a rhetorical commitment to gender equality?" (2014).

In similar vein, Hassim problematises the EFF and questions if the EFF, "the radical new kids on the political bloc, can offer any hope for beleaguered feminists", she concludes that "the signs are not promising" (2016). These questions and challenges to the EFF are not unique to this political party within the political genealogy of South Africa. Such questions are reminiscent of the history of other liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC), Pan-African Congress (PAC) and the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) (Gqola, 2001). They are also historical critiques that are not exclusive to South Africa. In the United States for instance, Black Feminists scholars have highlighted that "Black-run organisations have historically […] not stressed Black women's issues" (Hill Collins 2000: 7).

The EFF's Founding Manifesto as well as its Constitution, both offer written commitments to the fight to end patriarchy (EFF, 2013). Its leaders have also claimed this mission in various public platforms, however that does not mean that patriarchy does not flourish within the party's culture. Additionally, an articulated commitment to ending patriarchy does not exempt the EFF from ideological and methodological contradictions, as well as tensions and omissions on gendered forms of oppression within the Black community. It is following that observation , that I understand that in order to make a real difference in the lives of Black women in South Africa we cannot stop questioning and highlighting the conditions of our oppression as well as the contradictions of supposed- "safe spaces"[2] for Black people. As Amina Mama observes, "adopting political rhetoric and symbolism, however earnestly, does not unproblematically lead to personal *[and political]* change"

[2] I utilise "safe spaces" within the Black Consciousness perspective where Black solidarity, organising and mobilising solely amongst Black people is affirmed.

(1995:6). *Asijiki: Black Women in the Economic Freedom Fighters, Owning Space, Building a Movement*, is a study which examines the EFF in light of this observation. I lead my research inquiry with the following research questions:

1. How is gender understood and advocated for in the EFF?
2. Does the EFF provide an enabling environment for women to thrive within the political party and for the advancement of gender justice more broadly?
3. Do women in the EFF believe that gender and gendered relations define the hierarchy of power within the EFF?

Brenda Sanya and Anne Lutomia speak to the manner in which African "women are often rendered invisible in the conventional history-making projects" (2015:70). Observers of the EFF have made similar arguments in relation to Black women leaders in the EFF. For instance, Magadla (2015) has spoken to the "silence" of Black women leaders of the EFF, while Lisa Vetten has argued that Black women leaders of the EFF seem to "play second fiddle to the party's male national leadership" (2016). I agree with Magadla and Vetten in relation to the representation of Black women leaders of the EFF in the media as well as political moments that have dominated our public sphere. However, unlike Magadla and Vetten, I do not hold the view that Black women leaders in the EFF are "silent" or "play second fiddle to the party's male national leadership" in relation to their movement building efforts and governance roles within the EFF. This view has influenced one of my key objectives in this research inquiry, which is to demonstrate how Black women leaders in the EFF have been agentive both in creating a space for themselves as well constituting the EFF and its effectiveness in the last three years.

In a context where there is meager memory work on Black women in the EFF in South African media, academia and political discourse, I found it important to also demonstrate and archive how Black women within the EFF have occupied, owned and built this political space within my research inquiries. As Pumla Gqola (2016) noted in our conversation, we often study the exclusion and erasure of Black women's work in political movements after it has happened. Therefore, archiving the memory of Black women's political work and efforts within the EFF becomes crucial to guard against that erasure. To highlight the ways in which Black women are creating and building structures and

how they reconstruct the activist space becomes a crucial African Feminist exercise because these actions are historically and presently omitted within public discourse.

Black women leaders of the EFF that I have interacted with, engaged and witnessed have not come into the space asking for inclusion, they have occupied the space and built the movement. This research paper thus seeks to highlight the ways in which Black women constitute the EFF, because too often patriarchy pretends that it does all the labour in movement spaces. The importance of this work is notable from the past experiences of Black women engaging in research and memory work to excavate the political and intellectual legacies of Black women under colonial and apartheid South Africa.

An example of this can be found in a conversation hosted by Gqola and Yakes with Black Consciousness Movement leader, Mamphela Ramphele, within this conversation they highlighted how difficult it was to trace other Black women within this movement as well as their archived material (1998:94). Similarly in 1992, Pravin Ram conducted a research project titled: "The Mobilisation of Women: The Black Women's Federation 1975-1977, With Particular Reference to Natal" (1992). Within this paper Ram highlighted the difficulties in locating Black women involved in the federation in order to conduct interviews with them (1992:viii). Experiences such as these have driven my political and intellectual agency to contribute towards guarding against history repeating itself in relation to the legacies of some of the Black women leading the EFF. In this research endeavour I center the voices and stories of Black women in the EFF in the process of memory making in order to go against "the privileging of patriarchal archives and archival practices" (Sanya and Lutomia, 2015:72). It is a project that seeks to contribute to the work of Black Feminist scholarship that has fought for Black women's meaning and political work "to be kept alive" (Mama 2001).

Chapter Outline

This first chapter highlights and further outlines four research objectives for this study. Within this chapter I provide socio-economic and political contextual analysis of South African society which facilitated the birth of the EFF. Thirdly, I explore the rationale behind the study and demonstrate the importance of engaging in a research inquiry to explore the EFF in relation to gender. The last section of this chapter is dedicated to my theoretical framework which draws from interpretative theories and conceptual tools

termed African Feminisms and Black Feminisms that have been developed by Black women from the African continent and diaspora which speak to the interconnected nature of systems of oppression (hooks 1984; Gqola 1999, 2000; Oyěwùmí 2004; Lewis 1993; Tamale 1999; April 2012; Davies 1994; Mama 1995; Hill Collins 2000).

These alternative epistemologies by Black women have been obscured and delegitimised in favour of dominant interpretive theories attributed to white men, white women, and Black men who we choose to be the ultimate guides of our political thinking. Therefore in engaging with questions relating to Black women's political subjectivity within the EFF, I found Black women's interpretative tools which value the daily experiences and voices of Black women the most valuable (hooks 1984; Gqola 2001; Oyěwùmí 2004; Lewis 1993; Tamale 1999; April 2012; Davies 1994; Mama 1995; Hill Collins 2000).

The second chapter is dedicated to my literature review where I explore literature on Black women's experiences in political movements on the African continent and within the African diaspora. This literature has assisted in locating the EFF's gender discourse and the experiences of Black women leaders of the EFF within a historical context that continues to impact contemporary political dynamics. This is literature that engages Black women's struggle to be seen as equal citizens in African politics and in the nation state, literature that also deals with the ways in which gendered dynamics to oppression have been placed in the margins while race and class struggles have been prioritised (Modise and Curnow, 2000; Hassim 2006; Ginwala 1990; Magadla 2015; Yates and Gqola, 1998; April 2012; Tamale 1999; Hill Collins 2000; Geisler 2004).

I also engaged with literature that focuses on Black women's political legacies, work that pointed to the forms of erasures of those legacies while simultaneously engaging in memory work to unmask and retrieve Black women's political and intellectual legacies into the public domain (Gqola 2011; April 2012, Tamale 1999; Lewis 1999; Zeleza 2005; Moodley 1993). Lastly, I focus on literature that looks into the contemporary dynamics that influence Black women's lives in South Africa today, as well as Black women's positionality in temporary politics (Gqola 2015; Gender Links 2016; Hassim 2006; Thobejane 2015; Snodgrass 2015). These texts have assisted in locating Black women's positionalities in contemporary politics in South Africa within its historical contexts.

In the third chapter I introduce the articulated gender policy practice and discourse of the EFF where I begin investigating the first question of this research paper which is: how gender is understood and advocated for in the EFF? In my textual, theoretical and practical explorations, one of the central limitations of the EFF in relation to gender became apparent. I demonstrate that this limitation is an epistemological one, because the EFF lacks a theoretical and conceptual foundation and language which guides the party's mission of dismantling patriarchy. I attribute this limitation to the party's ideological foundation which is Marxism, Leninism and Fanoniasm (EFF 2013). I argue that this ideological grounding centers class and racial analysis while placing Black women's lived experiences and theoretical interpretations at the margins. I show how this theoretical limitation has influenced the political education of party members, as well as the party's election manifesto's which have demonstrated a failure to gender mainstreaming.

I outline the theoretical framework which has guided my inquiry which is African and Black Feminism, and I bring together the wealth of scholarship by African Feminists and Black Feminists who have cautioned against political movements and academic institutions leaving Black women's lived experiences untheorized while simultaneously marginalising the ideas of Black women who have reflected, conceptualised and theorised on their own lived experiences and the interconnected nature of oppression. In addition to this, I also provide responses from Black women leaders of the EFF that I engaged in conversation with regarding to this epistemological limitation in relation to gender in the EFF, as well as examples of Black women leaders of the EFF who have pointed to this gap. I argue that the EFF needs to address its epistemological limitations in relation to gendered oppression by engaging African Feminist work which has been invested in theorising about Black women's lived experiences while providing political and conceptual alternatives to archiving justice.

In this chapter I also demonstrate how the EFF has shifted from the initial image of the party that we were introduced to in its first press conference- an image that was dominated by Black men with only three Black women in their "inside group". Currently, the EFF is the leading political party in terms of gender representation and parity in its leadership structures (Gender Links 2016). This is due to their commitment to equal gender representation. I argue that this demonstrated commitment by the party is

important because of the history of Black women's marginalization and auxiliary membership in Black political formations in South Africa. However, I bring together the scholarship of African Feminists such as Desire Lewis (1999), Syliva Tamale (1999), Elaine Salo and Desire Lewis (2002) and Lindiwe Makhunga (2015), who have cautioned us in reducing gender justice in political movements and government institution to simply numbers. These African Feminists show us that in order to create an effective environment to achieve gender justice; we need to invest in an African Feminist theoretical and policy agenda that challenges all interconnected forms of oppression. This is a recommendation that I suggest the EFF should follow.

In the fourth chapter, I unpack my chosen qualitative methodological framework which has been inspired by an "African Feminist Standpoint" (Mupotsa 2007). This standpoint takes into "account for subjective experiences, moving past the notion of spectacle, to take on a serious study of interiority" (Mupotsa 2007:16). Central to this standpoint is challenging "male stream" methodology which commands the researcher to alienate themselves from their "research object" and be the voice of authority in the research process in order to produce credible knowledge (Hill Collins 2000). Therefore, it was important for me to be self-reflective as the 'researcher', to have an awareness of the power dynamics and ethical questions inherent in knowledge production. These power and ethical dynamics have been used to objectivity and misrepresent Black women's subjectivity and experiences. Therefore, I chose to partake in an African Feminist Standpoint because it complimented my positionality and ethical desires.

I embarked on this research process to investigate the EFF's gender positions and experiences of Black women leaders of the EFF while negotiating my own political and personal location, as a member of the EFF and a former researcher for the party in parliament. It's also important to highlight that I have formed more than political bonds with the Black women leaders of the EFF that I have been in conversation with in this study. With some, I have also formed friendships and I hold a deep sense of care for the personhood of all those involved in this study. The African Feminist Standpoint allowed for the freedom to unmask the time spent in political discussions, breaking bread, sharing wine, being housed in some of their homes while working in parliament in this research inquiry. Thus, as I explore these questions I do not alienate myself from this community.

Within my endeavor to answer the questions I have posed and to engage with Black women leaders of the EFF, I made use of narrative and biographical interpretative methods in order to put the African Feminist Standpoint into practice. In the study, this consisted of recorded multigenerational conversations with nine Black women leaders of the EFF between 23-56 years old on their gendered experiences in the EFF without alienating my own subjectivity. Formal consent was given by the individual leaders for the purposes of the study in order to fulfill the ethical research requirements stipulated by the university's ethics committee. These women occupy different leadership roles within the EFF and come from different political backgrounds and regions. These conversations have taken place in restaurants, balconies of their homes and EFF events. Narrative and biographical interpretative methods were useful for the study because of the intimate and sensitive nature of the political and personal questions I posed.

Within "traditional question-and-answer format", reflections to questions such as "why", "when", "how did you feel", "what happened", and "what did you do" are missed from the conversation and these are the kinds of responses I was looking for (Hollway and Jefferson 1997: 56).These conversations have also spoken to Participatory Action Research within feminist methods where my engagement with Black women leaders occurred within an environment where there was care and interest in each other's subjectivity and thoughts. Therefore, in posing particular questions I was not only interested in the productive answers to the questions that I was asking, I was interested to the subjectivity of the Black women leaders of the EFF. This process facilitated the possibility of opening new awareness to social, political and personal questions. Therefore our engagements were a conscientising process for us and ordinary experiences helped to mobilise a sense of what was shared between "us" and that is how we come to understand our social and political locations (Allen 2011; Maple and Edwards 2010).

Within these conversations, I do not present myself as the sole interpreter nor do I present Black women in this study as "research subjects". I made a methodological and ethical decision to directly quote their own words, analysis, theorizations extensively, I do this in order to subvert the continued the cycle of Black women's legacies being illustrated only for purposes of representation and symbolic value as Thozama April warns us has been done to anti-colonial struggle and gender activist Charlotte Maxeke

whose intellectual and theoretical contributions have been masked[3] (2012). I made the Black women leaders of the EFF that I was in conversation with aware of where you have quoted them directly, they were given the option of anonymity if they so wish and could retract any statements at any point during the recorded conversations. Lastly, I engaged in a textual analysis of EFF texts and media archives, in conjunction with participatory observations of EFF gatherings where the EFF also provided written consent to the university's ethic committee acknowledging awareness of the study as well as the participatory observations that I held.

The following chapter is titled "Findings: Autobiographical Profiles of Six Women Leaders in the EFF". In this chapter, I draw attention to the life and political histories of Black women leading the EFF; I also demonstrate the ways in which these women have contributed towards building the party. Within these profiles I intend to contribute to Black and African Feminists efforts to render visible aspects of the histories and work of Black women in the EFF that have been placed in the margins of our political discourse.

In the concluding chapter of the study I summarise my research findings while calling for African Feminist grassroots movement building from the EFF that will be led by Black women in the EFF. I also call for the party to engage in a project of imagination that will reimagine Black women's participation in political movements South Africa and will centre Black women's lived experiences and justice in our public discourse.

[3] Charlotte Maxeke was born in 1871 and was the first Black woman to graduate with a university degree in South Africa. She was a political activist and an educator. She formed the Bantu Women's League in 1913 which later became the ANC Women's League.

1.1 The Rise of the EFF: Context

Global inequality has reached extremes, with reports indicating that the "richest 1% now have more wealth than the rest of the world combined" (Oxfam 2006:1). Global inequality is racialised and gendered in its forms. In the past few years, we have witnessed multiple protests globally that aim to destabilise the prevailing global inequalities, from Occupy Wall Street (Tejerina 2013) to the more recent #FeesMustFall movements in South Africa. From these movements, we increasingly see young people engaged in a "global youth rebellion, which engulfed various countries in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis" that is not accepting the violence of the dominant neoliberal world economic structure that leaves many structurally poor and marginalised (Nieftagodien 2015: 449). In South Africa, these moments of dissent are witnessed in the rising social justice movements that are challenging the political and economic status quo (Naidoo 2015:438). We are seeing them through political formations and the rising service delivery protests. Protests by farm-workers, mine-workers, landless people's movements and the student uprisings which are calling for decolonization and the end to the commodification of education through exorbitant fees which keep the poor, primarily Black, majority of the population excluded (Alexander 2010:25). #FeesMustFall and many movements all over South Africa which do not operate in isolation, form a part of the larger discourse that puts forward that Black lives still don't matter in post-apartheid South Africa.

The EFF emerges within this background and the failures of the ANC-led South Africa to curb inequalities in the country, because we live in a country where three white men own the same wealth as the bottom half of the population (Oxfam 2017). These three white men are: "retail tycoon Christo Wiese, Glencore CEO Ivan Glasenberg and Aspen Pharmacare chief executive Stephen Saad" (Omarjee 2017). The EFF also emerges in a context where the chosen political and economic interventions followed by the ANC in its two decade rule such as: the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR); Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) and now the National Development Plan (NDP) have prioritised a global neoliberal economic agenda instead of radical economic redistribution model in South Africa (McKinley 2008). The EFF as a political party sought to challenge the economic decisions taken by the governing party in order to pursue an economic redistributive path where Black South Africans would share in the wealth of the country. This is evident in the party's name, "Economic Freedom Fighters". The party

has labelled itself as the only party committed to the economic liberation of Black South Africans, and as "our last hope" which is reflected in their 2016 Local Government Election campaign (EFF 2016). The EFF has also characterized itself as "a radical, left, and anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement with an internationalist outlook anchored by popular grassroots formations and struggles" (Shivambu 2014: 61).

The EFF's rise has also been influenced by South Africa's party political context within the country which is characterized by the "unravelling of the ANC's hegemony (Hart 2013) and the inauguration of a reconfiguration of left forces" (Nieftagodien, 2015: 448). In 2012 the ANC expelled it's the President of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), Julius Malema from the party, while they gave the leagues spokesperson Shivambu a three year suspension (ANC 2012). They found that Malema and Shivambu were "guilty of committing various acts of misconduct" in terms of the ANC constitution (ANC 2012). In the era of Malema's leadership in the ANCYL there was an emphasis on the value of achieving "economic freedom" for the Black majority. Furthermore, in 2008 a new political party was formed called the Congress of the People (COPE) following Thabo Mbeki's recall as the President of the country and in the 2009 National Elections, COPE received 1, 311 027 votes which was 7.4% of the national vote in that election (Davies 2013). Many ANC voters and supporters shifted their support to COPE, however leadership infighting which played out in the courts and the media between Mbhazima Shilowa and Mosiuoa Lekota left to the party's disintegration (Davies, 2013). Additionally, Black Conscious social movements which included the September National Imbizo (SNI) were looking to join forces with likeminded formations in order to increase their national impact and footprint. When the EFF was formed in 2013, some members of the ANCYL, COPE and SNI turned to the EFF.

Since its formation in 2013, it has gone onto solidifying itself as the third largest political party in South Africa. The party received over one million votes in the 2014 South African National and Provincial Elections, which proved to the whole nation their large influence, as a new political party (Electoral Commission of South Africa 2014). In the 2016 Local Government Elections, the EFF "increased its share of votes from 6.8% of the total to 8.2%. This is a 20% increase in their vote share over a two year period" (SABC News 2016).

1.2 Rationale

I found it important to engage in a study to explore how the EFF articulates and advocates for racialized and gendered liberation for Black women in South Africa. It was also crucial to explore the experiences and political subjectivity of Black women in the party as well as to archive their movement building efforts for political and personal reasons. The first political and personal reason is one that is inspired by Carole Boyce Davis who makes the observation that "the additional identity of femaleness which interferes with seamless Black identity" has been "ignored, erased or "spoken for"' (1994: 6). Therefore, I had to explore the EFF in relation to gender for myself and other Black women who support and vote for the EFF. As Black women, our challenges have always been secondary to Black liberation politics. If the EFF describes itself as radical, then it would require it to deal with all forms of oppression that affect Black people in South Africa, because they are not singular. This act would also be "radical because it has never been done before" (Hill Collins 2000:233). I had to investigate if this commitment by the party is clear, if not what are the gaps that need to be filled.

The rationale behind this paper also takes its cue from the South African Commission for Gender Equity (CGE) which conducted a study in 2013 looking at the representation of women in political party structures. One of the findings of the study was that: "there is a poor representation of women in leadership positions of political parties. This means political structures are still dominated by men, despite the constitutional clause for equality" (2013: 8). Although the study did not include the EFF, which was not formed when their research was conducted, one cannot help but notice the dominance of men as leaders in the EFF. In the EFF's top six leadership structure there are only two women; the party Treasurer and Deputy Secretary General. The positions of: President and Commander in Chief, Deputy President, Secretary General and National Chairperson are positions held by men. Furthermore, the EFF is represented by only 10 women out of 25 members in parliament. Therefore, I needed to explore if this was the general pattern of the party within its other national and regional structures.

The EFF is also an important party to explore because it is a Black youth led movement that has made an explicit commitment to decolonisation, being pro-poor, anti-white supremacy and patriarchy. In "The Economic Freedom Fighters: South Africa's turn

Towards Populism?", Sithembile Mbete argues that "an examination of gender in the EFF's politics is a rich subject for future research" (2015: 41). Therefore, another reason that makes the EFF unique is that it is a new party, and there are little to no academic studies that I know of that look at the emergence of new parties in SA through an African Feminist lens and aims to interrogate how the party positions itself in terms of issues pertaining to gender, race, sexuality, and class. It is further important to look at because Black women cannot gain their "economic freedom" in a context of practiced patriarchy and silencing.

Another motivation for this study stems from the draft research proposal of this study that I presented in May 2016 at a seminar hosted by the Department of African Literature. The title for the study was *Black Women of the EFF Speak: Black Women's Survival in Political Spaces*. However, in a conversation with Pumla Gqola after the seminar, she highlighted that judging from the cases I had presented it seemed that Black women in the EFF were not just surviving in the party but were succeeding. She challenged me to look beyond the constraints that Black women face in a patriarchal society and in masculinist political spaces, to also explore and document Black women political efforts and successes in order to guard against the erasure of their efforts. After that conversation, the direction of the paper changed. I needed to emphasize the ways in which Black women that I have known and seen in the EFF did not wait to be invited into the space, they have come into the space and they are building the movement in extraordinary ways. My conversations with Black women leaders in the EFF for the purposes of the study reemphasised this in ways that also surprised me. In conversation with Siphokazi Magadla (2016) she also highlighted that the word "'survival' assumes that the party could do without women" which is what this paper seeks to contest. Therefore, the rationale behind this study is to take on the masculine bias which has down-played Black women's roles, not only in the struggle for liberation but in contemporary South African politics (Gqola 2015: 70). This becomes a crucial African Feminist political tool to archive the work by Black women in the EFF to build the movement.

In an interview with the CIC of the EFF, Julius Malema, South African media personality-Anele Mdoda observed how Malema has people around him in the EFF to work and learn from. She mentioned the following names: Fana Mokoena, Floyd Shivambu, Mbuyiseni

Ndlozi while Malema also highlighted Dali Mpofu which brought Mdoda to the conclusion that in the EFF "it just looks like everything is spread out" (*Real Talk with Anele Mdoda*, 2016). Although Malema stated that "it is more about a collective, you know the success of political parties is the ability to listen to another person and allow them to feel that they are part", yet one cannot help but see the lack of reference to Black women in the EFF who also contribute to shaping the organization and Malema's leadership (2016). Watching the episode, which I appreciated outside of this particular moment, took me back to Amina Mama's question which asks: "where are women in African political cultures?" (1997). Therefore, through this paper I hope to subvert the represented image of the EFF in mass media, an image that depicts the functioning of the EFF due to men who are leaders of the party. I seek to challenge this image by demonstrating the efforts and achievements of Black women in building the party. Furthermore, this is an important exercise because Black women in the EFF are often spoken about and are spoken for in mainstream South African discourse. Within this research inquiry, I seek to place their voices and lived experiences at the centre of my analysis. I seek to understand how Black women within the EFF articulate their political interests and the struggle against patriarchal oppression not only within the party but broader South Africa. Through this research, I seek to contribute to existing scholarship on Black women involved in political movements who fight to challenge white supremacist capitalist and patriarchal systems.

Lastly, in *Recognise Me for Who I Am,* Lwazi Lushaba calls for:

> Fellow black academics to ponder with me the following question: if we as black South Africans continue to be absent or to be exceptions in these [university] departments, who will write about us as they know us? Who will write our history – the history of the land?....Who will write about the black miners we lost in Marikana, not as the working class but as black people whose crime was to be black in a country that is anti-black. Who will write a befitting biography of Brenda Fassie, of Mkabayi ka Jama, of Mgcineni "Mambush" Noki? (2016)

Seeing the ways in which Black women leaders of the EFF have been masked and misrepresented in our political discourse, the agency to document the experiences, contributions and movement building efforts of Black women leaders in the EFF comes from a similar position that Lushaba highlights. If I do not engage in this study, who will?

It comes from a sense of responsibility and commitment to Black women in the EFF. It comes from a sense of love and care. I deeply value the Black women I am in conversation with, the Black women who I have worked with in my EFF branch, Black women who I have engaged and sang with at EFF events and rallies. I care about Black women in my rural home Lady Frere in the Eastern Cape and other rural areas in the country that need the political discourse of "economic freedom" to mean and make substantive change to their lived experiences. I also deeply care for future generations of Black women whose lives I hope will not reflect material lack and structural violence that we continue to experience today.

1.3 Research Objectives

- To examine the experiences of Black women within the EFF
- To evaluate the tangible ways in which women in the EFF access and exercise power.
- To examine how women in the EFF understand and articulate their role in relation to the hierarchy of power within the party.
- To archive Black women's movement building methods and contributions

1.4 Theoretical Framework:

While embarking on this research processes I was guided by Black Feminist and African Feminist theories. These theories originated from Black women in the African continent and the African diaspora. Black Feminist and African Feminist intellectual traditions are informed by liberatory theories that seek to move Black women away from the margins of society into the centre (hooks 1984:15). I found it imperative to use epistemological views developed by Black women in the African continent and the African diaspora encompassing theoretical frameworks that have been described as "Black Feminism", "African Feminism", "Postcolonial Feminism" and "Womanism". As emphasised by Pumla Gqola, "the differences between these spaces lie more in the name than in what each propagates", therefore the ideas that guide these theories are more crucial than the names we have devoted to them (2001:17). Although these theories are not within a single collective, what binds all of these theories mentioned is that they are centred on "valuing of the everyday experiences of Black women" (Gqola 2001: 17). In this research inquiry I too am preoccupied with the everyday political experiences of Black women

within the EFF. Therefore, I will borrow the common theoretical thread that Pumla Gqola describes as "Blackwomencentric" spaces and theoretical underpinnings (2001:11).

Black Feminisms and African Feminisms emanate from the experiences of Black women who have occupied and have been part of movements to end racism, colonialism and movements to end heteronormative patriarchy. As Thozama April demonstrates, "critical feminist scholarship begins to question the exclusionary power which made it possible for women to organise as women in the first place" (2012: 99). Therefore, with the experiences of Black women within these political spaces came the realisation that "generally, when white middle-class feminists talk about 'women,' they mean white women, in the same way that discussion of racism is usually predicated on the experience of black men" (Lewis 1991: 540). Within white feminist spaces and scholarship Black women have challenged Feminist scholarship that looks at gender through a Eurocentric and universalised lens, where all women are the same (Oyěwùmí 2004:3). As emphasised by Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí when she writes: "gender cannot be considered outside of race and class. This position led to the emphasis on the differences amongst women and the need to theorise multiple forms of oppression particularly where inequalities of race, gender and class are evident" (2004:3). African Feminists such as Desiree Lewis (1993) and Sylvia Tamale (1999) have also made similar arguments, stating that we cannot look at the relationship between patriarchy and gender from a universalist lens. Speaking on the development on feminism in South Africa, Lewis noted how feminist spaces particularly in the academy such as "South African Conference of Race, Class, and Gender" (1993: 535). Furthermore, Lewis argues that "concepts like 'woman' and 'man' cannot exist independently of racial, class, or regional affiliations: the gendered social subject is never simply 'woman' or 'man,' but always 'black woman,' 'white man,' 'first-world middle-class woman,' and so on" (1993: 536). Therefore, as a Black woman looking into the political realities of Black women within the EFF and how the party articulates gendered oppression, looking at gender through a universalistic lens which African Feminists and Black Feminist theories have critiqued would have been insufficient for this research inquiry.

Additionally, the oppressive and marginalizing power within Black liberation movements resulted in Black women questioning the view that Blackness is synonymous within

sameness. Black women in political movements highlighted how patriarchy and homophobia were further tools of oppression used by Black heterosexual men upon them (Modise and Curnow 2000:36). Furthermore, as Thozama April brings forth, women like Charlotte Maxeke were challenging "hegemonic constructions of women's subjectivities in the 1920s and 1930s. Histories of national liberations in Africa often obscure the struggles against other forms of domination" (2012: 144). Carole Boyce Davies also reveals how "certain versions of African nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism become discourses which turn on the concept of a uni-centricity and imply the exclusion or subordination of women's issues or questions of sexual identity or difference within" (1994: 5).

While Amina Mama describes how the conditions within Black liberation movements forced Black women to arrive at the point which articulated that "black women's lives are structured not only by class divisions of late capitalist society but also by the combined effects of race and gender oppression" (1995: 145). In the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), Gqola highlights that although its "stated purpose was the complete emancipation of all Black South Africans, the only oppressive force acknowledged [in early Black Consciousness (BC)] was race" (1999:2). Therefore, the interpretative lens to oppression offered by BC would have limited my research inquiries. Interventions by Black women through stands of African Feminisms and Black Feminisms have shaped my thinking, that is, to look at Black women in the EFF and myself not just as though our shared racial category as Black people, but to see the differences within that racial group which is shaped by our gender(s), sexuality, social mobility, level of education and other factors.

Black Feminist and African Feminist theories have worked to transform the lives of women by "addressing gender injustice all the way from micro- to the macro-political level" by looking at the "level of our subjectivity, at the level of our personal lives and relationships and thirdly at the level of political economy" because by doing so, we avoid dismissing different levels of injustice relating to Black women's lives (Mama 2001:61). Sylvia Tamale speaks to Mama's position for a holistic assessment of Black women's lived experiences in the African continent. Tamale argues that "the dialectical relationship between gender, class, ethnicity, religion, imperialism, and neo-colonialism is especially pertinent for an analysis of gender relations in the African context. Any analysis that lacks

such a multifocal approach to gender relations in the African context can only be superficial and truncated" (1999: 3). Furthermore, by choosing a holistic theoretical approach which looks at the personal, political, social and power structures we are then able to provide a "comprehensive and perspicacious examination of the material forces at work in the process of women's subordination and marginalization as well as other features such as women's capacity to organize" (Tamale 1999: 29).

Moreover, as argued by Lewis, a central theme of African Feminisms has been to pay "broad attention to voice, communication and agency enlarge conventional perceptions of women, transcending 'resistance' models that often constrain understanding of women's roles as political and historical actors" (2004:28). She shares the same sentiment with Hill Collins who states that Black Feminist thought focuses on Black women's voices because "everyone has spoken for Black women, making it difficult for us to speak for ourselves" (2000:124). The motivation for centering the voices of Black women in the EFF was driven by my understanding of the importance of Black women's voices, and ideas for self-definition as emphasised by African Feminist and Black Feminist theories.

Particularly for this research project, strands of Black Feminist and African Feminist theories are valuable to me for their readings of the nation state and institutions. For instance, they question and challenge "the patriarchal relations of domination encoded therein" while demystifying and exposing "the political linkage between the private and the political" (Tamale 1999: 26). Consequently, this conceptual framework allows for the exploration of the aspects in which gender influences our past and present character of politics through recognising the patriarchal nature of what we view as national politics, beyond gender quotas (Tamale 1999: 26). Black Feminist and African Feminist theories are rooted in movements fighting for total liberation from all forms of structural oppression, because it is Black women as a collective who bear the brunt of these interconnected forms of oppression. The ideas of Black women, who have reflected, conceptualised and theorised on their lived experiences and the interconnected nature of oppression have been masked within mainstream academic and political discourse. As April shows us, Maxeke's legacy:

> Stems from her theorisations of the inequalities that prevailed in South Africa in the 1920s and 1930s. Her work forms part of the critical scholarship on gender and racial relations in South Africa. Maxeke's theorisation of the everyday can enhance contemporary studies of liberation struggles and gender relations in Africa. She devised the conceptual tools that challenged early twentieth century debates about Africans in South Africa. Her gendered reading of the debate about the native question enabled her to articulate concerns about race, class and gender inequality among the educated elite of the time. She highlighted the impact of the link between race, class and gender in the formation of the state. (2012: 149)

Yet Maxeke's conceptual tools as well as other African women have been obscured and delegitimised in favour of dominant interpretive theories attributed to white men, white women, and Black men who we choose to be the ultimate guides of our political thinking. Hill Collins (2000) deems Black women's theories as "subjugated knowledge" for the reasons that April highlights has led to "women's theorizations of the everyday get[ting] displaced by 'the bigger national questions'" (2012: 39).

2. Literature Review

For the purposes of this research inquiry, I visited literature on Black women's experiences within formal political spaces in Africa and the African diaspora; this has been in regards to both liberation movements and political parties. I have made use of literature on the nation state, on the politics of representation, on movements and memory. I draw from texts written in different historical periods. I rely on historical texts that engage with present realities of women in politics. From these texts written at different times, we are able to see how women's struggles for equal status in political movements are continuous.

2.1 Black Women in Politics: A Fight for Belonging

The challenge that Black women face in participating in Black political institutions and movements is a historical one. Shireen Hassim states that "there is virtually no existing theoretical literature about the experiences of women in African political parties" (2006:186). She attributes this to "women's secondary status in the nationalist movement [that] has been replicated in the new political order" (2006:187). Black women in the continent joined many liberation movements in order to fight against colonial oppression. These women were from different backgrounds, cultures and had different educational attainments (Geisler 2004:39). For instance, in Uganda Sylvia Tamale writes argues that, "as in many other African countries, the Ugandan women's movement was closely linked to anticolonial actions and the subsequent independence movement" (1999: 10). Plenty of these liberation movements on the African continent were inspired by Marxism, similarly to the EFF. Geisler further points us to the fact that gender oppression within these Marxist inspired movements in the continent was analysed and attributed to capitalist oppression, they believed that if capitalism would be abolished then patriarchal domination would be automatically destroyed (2004:45).

In South Africa, although the democratic transition has been labelled as one of the most successful transitions in terms of integrating women, Lindiwe Zulu who is a MP for the ANC points to its gendered flaws (Britton 2005:3). Zulu states that when the political negotiations began to reach a democratic dispensation in South Africa were excluded from that process "because the negotiators had not thought it necessary to involve women. This is nothing new for women, because we had seen the same process in

Zimbabwe, Angola, and Mozambique" (Britton 2005:3).

Zulu's statement shows us that the negotiation processes into South Africa's new democracy had a masculinist bias. Even how we remember political struggle icons against colonialism and apartheid today has a masculinist bias. We have seen this masculinist bias in country's in East Africa too, Sylvia Tamale writes that "all negotiations for Uganda's independence took place between the colonizers and an elite male collection of budding indigenous politicians, with Buganda placed at centre stage. Women, on the other hand, were deliberately ignored by the colonial power and the Ugandan patriarchs despite their protests and their active participation in the struggle" (1999:13).

It was not an easy process joining these movements for African women. In South Africa for instance, the ANC was formed in 1912 by Black men, women were not allowed to be party members and women were auxiliary members until the formation of the ANCWL in 1943 (Ginwala, 1990). In Tanzania, one of the most prominent women liberation movement, Bibi Titi Mohammed had to provide her husband's permission before she could join the Tanzanian African Union (TANU) (Geisler 2004:42). When welcomed into these formal political spaces, African women were seen as "supportive roles" to the struggle for liberation. Thozama April retells her conversations with people who were part of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and ANC who were mostly men (2016). She tells us that within these interviews, women's "supportive roles" were to mainly organize political events in the 1950's and 1960's (2012: 6). Magadla also details the difficulties faced by women particularly in exiled liberation wings of political parties, she notes that women were made invisible, silenced, used to provide gendered labour such as cooking and cleaning (2015). Thandi Modise was a woman commander for Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) in exile, through recounting her experience, she exposes "how women in the struggle didn't only fight one war against the South African apartheid state; instead the women who bore arms in the name of racial freedom had to fight a two-pronged battle" (Modise and Curnow, 2000:36). Women involved in the armed struggle in exile were sexually assaulted, sexually harassed and validate their sexuality within these movements and in their training camps (Magadla, 2015: 395; Modise and Curnow, 2000:36).

Furthermore, it was a difficult environment for women to be full political subjects and to

explore their leadership potential. In Zambia's United National Independence Party's (UNIP) Women's Brigade, members '"were not intended to seek political power for themselves' but they were 'helping men to achieve political power'" (Geisler 2004:43). This reality had similarities with experiences of Black women in the United States of America who were involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Hill Collins states that Black men were seen to be the only form of legitimate political leadership and women were either "excluded from or assigned subordinate roles within civil rights, women's, labour, or other organizations devoted to institutional transformation" (2000:216).

These contexts forced women to assimilate in order to be the accepted political subject, in what Ramphele defined as having "an honorary male status" (Yates and Gqola, 1998:90). Black women in politics were forced into assimilation in what Hill Collins also describes as "behavioural conformity" (2000:97). Gqola points us to the fact that "patriarchy creates an inferiority complex in women that also depends on hatred for the feminine and therefore self-loathing" (2015: 39). Black women spent a lot of time trying to fit into the masculine form, which has been seen as the only legitimate form of political being, that form of assimilation could be in speech or in song. Even within student movements today such as #FeesMustFall, it is not rare to see young women changing the tone of their voices to be a deeper one (consciously or unconsciously) in song or speech (Dlakavu, 2017).

Black women then started to question their prescribed gender roles and hierarchies within these liberation movements. In an interview by Gqola and Yakes, one of the founders of the BCM in South Africa Mamphela Ramphele states that because of the masculine bias of the movement it "had the unintended consequence of actually triggering in some of us the sense that we're more than just black people who are oppressed; we were also black women who are oppressed both by the very system that oppressed men and by the black men themselves-the very sense of being silent, being invisible" (1998:90). Thozama April states that when women were included or demanded inclusion within political movements, their inclusion only "as a support structure was symptomatic of a much larger question about the authorship of the theoretical and political discourse of women in the struggle for liberation" which sparked the questions that Ramphele alludes to (2012: 6). Geisler makes similar arguments; she points us to the

fact that the ideologies utilized in African liberation movements had little emphasis on the multiple forms of oppression experienced by African women (2004:40). She states that "Julius Nyerere, for example, has been credited for having once written a college essay on the subjugation of women in African society, but he was not much troubled by the 'women question' thereafter" (2004:40). April then highlights the silencing of theoretical frameworks presented and carved out by Charlotte Maxeke who was involved in the liberation struggles of Black South Africans who was a thinker, mobiliser, an educator and the founder of what is known today as the ANCWL. She says Maxeke "did not embrace essentialist notions of race, class, nationality and gender, but tried to foster ethical relations in understanding complex social relations. She understood that women by virtue of their positions in society were not considered as full citizens" (April 2012: 11).

Geisler refers to a speech by Samora Machel who was the leader of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique in 1973:

> The basis of the domination of women lies in the system of economic organisation of society, private ownership of the means of production, which necessarily leads to the exploitation of man by man. This means that, apart from the specific features of their situation, the contradiction between women and the social order is in essence a contradiction between women and the exploitation of man by man, between women and private ownership of the means of production. In other words, it is the same as the contradiction between the working masses and the exploitative social order. (2004:45)

Machel provides a simple definition of the intersecting oppressions faced by Black women. He also strips away that patriarchy was institutionalised in Black socialist movements such as his own. Machel's interpretation is similar to the one provided by Shivambu in *The Coming Revolution,* where he notes: "revolutionaries adopt a materialistic feminist conception of the gender problem which departs from an emphasis on the patronizing liberal discourse of a rights-based approach….. The violence suffered by women, which in South Africa results in high levels of rape, is structural and must be approached from that perspective" (2014:98). Although Shivambu notes that this approach will not "automatically translate into women's emancipation", he emphasizes that a theoretical grounding as a central step to reaching that outcome (2014:99). I find

this interpretative lens provided by Machel and Shivambu useful in terms of race and class questions in Africa, however it demonstrates limitations when interpreting the gender and sexuality analysis. For instance, Sylvia Tamale references Scott (1995) and shows us that once independence was achieved from colonial regimes in Africa, women from Mozambique and Angola expressed disappointment at their post-revolutionary Marxist governments who "accorded them affirmative action in the public sphere without demonstrating a further commitment to dismantling the male tributaries of power" (1999:20).

2.2 Black Women's Political Legacies in South Africa: Erasure and (Re) Memory

Gqola has spoken to the representation of the legacy of anti-apartheid activist, Albertina Sisulu after her passing in June 2011. She notes that in public discourse, her personhood and legacy were represented through the lens of a "wife", "matriarch" of a political family and it was only in a few instance where Sisulu was referred to as an "ANC veteran" or "stalwart" (2011: 68). Similarly, April demonstrates how Charlotte Maxeke is referred to as the "mother of the liberation struggle" instead of recognising Maxeke "as an intellectual, a theorist, a feminist or a nationalist. Yet, the period of Maxeke's political prominence from 1902 to 1939 establishes grounds for understanding the links that bind the state, women's political pasts, politics (both public and private) and history" (April 2012: 1). Similarly, Tamale notes that **"**despite their numerical majority and the important role they played in the politics of precolonial Uganda, women are conspicuous for their absence in the literature on the political history of Uganda; most of the analyses in the standard texts have generally proceeded as if women did not exist" (1999:3). All of the cases presented by Gqola, April and Tamale speak to the aspects in which Black women's intellectual and political legacies have been affected by "racialized and gendered processes that mask, mythologise and delegitimize women's agency" (Gqola 2011, 67). These interventions by Gqola and April have influenced the political importance of documenting the experiences and work of Black women leaders of the EFF, in order to contribute to guarding against the masking of their political legacies.

During the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the Khulumani Support Group stated that process "failed to recognise women as actors and activists in their own right - women who fought to defend their families, defend their lives, and to

defend political gains" (2013). The failure of the TRC to recognise women beyond their families and to acknowledge their political subjectivity speaks to observations made by Desiree Lewis while exploring the autobiographies of anti-apartheid activist of Ellen Kuzwayo and Mamphela Ramphele, Lewis argues that these autobiographies "reveal how citizenship-as- social standing covertly becomes a hierarchical and gendered process" (1999:38). Therefore, the TRC failing to acknowledge women as equal political subjects speaks to the gendered process of citizenship, and as Zeleza further notes "women's histories and gender history, are mutually reinforcing" (2005: 226).

Within the Black Consciousness Movement Asha Moodley argues that:

> The writings on the history of the Black Consciousness Movement which will always of course, tell you about Steve Biko, Harry Nengwekhulu, Barney Pityana, etc etc - in short, the founding 'fathers' of the Movement. There is barely any mention of the very many dynamic women who played a prominent role in building up this movement in its early days - women like Debs Matshoba, Nomsisi Kraai, Mamphele Ramphele, Bridgette Mabandla, Vuyi Mashalaba etc. (1993:46)

Thozama April states that although feminists historiographers have made successful attempts to try and unmask the legacy of women in fighting against colonial and apartheid South Africa, little has been invested in theorising about "women as intellectuals in their own right, but tended to view them as objects of liberation history. In doing so, the narrations have not engaged with the ways in which the intellectual project of women altered the discourse of the liberation struggle" (2012: 79). Therefore, the challenge for women working to memorialise Black women's legacy in contemporary South Africa becomes highlighting and recording the ways in which Black women in political movements such as the EFF theorise and conceptualise contemporary struggles. Furthermore, it is crucial to memorialise the political and personal strategies and tactics they employ.

2.3 The Status of Black Women in South Africa

Lyn Snodgrass demonstrates how South Africa is a progressive nation in relation to upholding women's rights, if we were to examine the country's commitments to women's rights on paper (2015). She notes that if we would evaluate the country in terms of global benchmarks, the country surpasses them in terms of possessing "solid representation

and leadership in state decision-making structures; extensive legal and constitutional mechanisms protecting their rights; ground breaking laws safeguarding their interests; and numerous civil society lobby groups" (2015). However, she demonstrates that majority of those that live under the poverty line in the country are Black women, furthermore gender based violence in the country "ranks as one of the worst in the world. As much as 40% to 50% of women in the country have suffered intimate partner violence" (2015). Black women are also the most affected by unemployment the lack of education. In 2014, it was recorded that "3,677,561 black women between the ages of 15 and 34 were not employed or attending schools, universities or colleges" (Africa Check, 2014). These statistics speak to Gqola's assessment that in South African discourse, we continue to "speak of 'women's empowerment' in ways that are not transformative" (2015: 63). All of the mechanisms that have been put on paper like the South African constitution have not resulted in the improved lived experiences of Black women in particular. Although the social conditions of Black women living under apartheid and Black women in South Africa have slightly altered, what remains intact is that issues impacting Black women are still not stressed.

What remains disappointing and enraging to me is that in our country, we as women "comprised 55% of all voters [….] Women traditionally take an active interest in elections, especially at the local level, as water, electricity and sanitation have a direct bearing on their lives" yet during the 2016 Local Government Elections South African political parties continued to ignore gendered socio-economic challenges in the country (Gender Links, 2016: 19). Furthermore, South African media coverage during the elections was also complicit in the marginalisation of gender issues. Only "0.002% of elections media coverage, down from 1% in both 2011 local government elections" was dedicated to women's challenges and interests (Gender Links, 2016: 20).

Although women in South Africa are largely represented within government bodies and political parties because of gender quotas, their "increased representation has not facilitated the redistribution of resources and power in ways that change the structural forces on which women's oppression rests" (Hassim 2006: 184). Furthermore, the biggest women's political formation in the country, the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) continues to place party political agenda's above women's interests, "its inadequacy as a

feminist organisation that champions women's liberation was underscored when its president, Angie Motshega, went on record saying it was not feminist. This, plus the league's much-publicised vacillation on whether the governing party and South Africa are ready for a woman president also shows the league is unsuited to fight patriarchy" (Thobejane 2015). Within the EFF, the question then lies, will Black women leaders of the EFF like the ANCWL place party interests that work against gender justice ahead of Black women's interests in the country? This is an important question, because instead of looking at the ways in which we can radically challenge patriarchy in our country, we have looked for minor ways of inclusion without challenging the structures and attitudes that perpetuate patriarchal violence and power (Gqola 2015:64). The biggest challenge therefore for Black women in South Africa is the depoliticisation of their issues where their daily challenges are part of the national political agenda.

3. EFF Gender Policy Practice

This chapter provides an overview of the EFF's articulated policies position on gender, with a focus on: gender discourse and language; gendered economic analysis as well as gender representation in leadership positions in the party. This chapter speaks to the main research question of this study, which is: how is gender understood and advocated for in the EFF? In speaking to the second research question of this study, which is: does the EFF provide an enabling environment for women to thrive within the party and for the advancement of gender justice more broadly? I also argue that gender representation mechanisms have been the main vehicle utilised by the EFF to provide an enabling environment for Black women within the party.

3.1 Economic Freedom Fighters: Evaluating its Articulated Gender Discourse

In 2013, when the EFF was formed, the party adopted their founding manifesto at their "National Assembly on what is to be done" held in Soweto in Johannesburg (Shivambu and Smith 2014:116). In the manifesto, the party articulates the socio-political and economic challenges faced by the country. From their analysis we see that the party places great emphasis on race and class dynamics which continues to define the country. It is worth quoting at length how the EFF articulated the "current conditions" in South Africa in their manifesto:

> 8. The 20 years of political freedom have not borne much significance to the people of South Africa. This is despite the fact that 20 years should, among other things, entail the intensification of South Africa's political will and its determination to unite the people of South Africa, building sustainable livelihoods for them through the social and economic emancipation of the black majority, and Africans in particular. The political power that was transferred to the black majority through inclusive elections in 1994 was never transformed into economic freedom as the majority of Africans remain on the margins of society as unemployed, underemployed or discriminated-against in their employment, while those who held economic, social and political power since the colonial period continue to enjoy economic, social, and professional privileges. Essentially, the post-1994 government, which has been given an overwhelming mandate to turn political power into total economic emancipation, has in effect rendered the majority of the people a powerless majority by stripping away all revolutionary content from the political power it holds…… 9. The post-1994

> government has maintained the apartheid and white-supremacist state, with the consequence that the majority, in effect, have become a voting, but powerless, majority. (EFF, 2013)

From the above excerpt, we can see that the party is able to centre race and class in their interpretation of South Africa's socio-economic and political context. The EFF highlights how the lived experiences of "the black majority" have not significantly improved due to the unchallenged and pervasive economic nature of "white supremacy" by the governing political party-ANC. However, they ignore the ways in which the post-1994 state has impacted on gendered oppression of Black women.

Blackness does not equate sameness is South Africa as put forward by African Feminist theorists. When we look at socio-economic statics in South African only from a race perspectives we would observe that in relation to the labour force and skills supply that "the levels and rates of unemployment are racialised, and in 2014 the majority of the unemployed population was African at 89%" (Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser and Arends, 2016:36). However, when we look at the same statics through a racialized and gendered lens, we observe that "for all population groups, the employed female shares are lower than male shares, and the largest difference between males and females is in the African group, suggesting that the most disadvantaged group are African females" (Reddy, Bhorat, Powell, Visser and Arends, 2016:36).

These statics demonstrate that we cannot think of Black within a single political category, this is what Crenshaw offers with "intersectionality" as a diagnostic tool of analysis, where all forms of oppression are interconnected (1991). In South Africa, our socio-economic and political conditions are deeply gendered, by emphasising a race and class lens, the EFF has left Black women's conditions in South African untheorised. As cautioned by Mamawe need to avoid "simplistic conceptualisations of race and racism" as well as seeing white supremacy and the colonial encounter as though "it affected all black people in a uniform manner" (1995: 148).

In the report on "the Status of Women in the South African Economy" conducted by the Ministry of Women in the Presidency, it indicates that "women remain more likely to be

employed in low-skilled occupations" and "women remain disadvantaged in terms of earnings and dominate lower earnings categories", this is particularly the case for Black women (2015: 10). Moreover, as indicated by Oxfam South Africa, "[Black] women are disproportionately represented amongst the poor, the unemployed, and the hungry. Alarmingly high rates of gender-based violence makes being a woman in South Africa more dangerous than being in some of the world's war-torn areas. Although gender non-conforming people can marry in South Africa, they still face relentless prejudice and exclusion from mainstream society, some of which manifests in extreme violence" (2016). Therefore these challenges particularly faced by Black women in relation to economic equality need to be questioned and theorised by the party adequately.

Within the party's articulated gender discourse in their founding manifesto, the EFF turns to gender in point 105 and 106 of their manifesto in a section titled: "Gender and Sexuality Question". I will quote this section at length:

> 105. The EFF is against the oppression of anyone based on their gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation, meaning that we are against patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia in all of its manifestations […].
>
> 106. The EFF would strive to realise women's liberation, through a variety of interventions, from education against patriarchy and sexism, to legislation and the close monitoring of the implementation of the same in order to realise women's empowerment in society, the family and the workplace. The EFF believes that gender-based violence and related antisocial activities are reinforced and even sustained by the deplorable conditions of our people, therefore a key to female emancipation is the emancipation of all. The EFF will emphasise transforming the lives of our people in the ghettos from one of generalised structural violence as a mechanism to end all violence, including violence against women" (EFF, 2013).

This articulation of gender as a separate instead of an integral issue in the party's political analysis and mission is a deep flaw of the EFF. As I have demonstrated within the literature evaluating Black women position in the country today in the previous section of this research inquiry, oppression in South Africa not has racial and class dynamics, it is also deeply gendered. Hence, Black women are the most economically vulnerable members of our society. It is telling the gendered oppression is only turned to in point

105 and 106 within the party's founding manifesto. In this extract, we can see how limited the party's articulation of gendered oppression in South Africa. Furthermore, by stating that gender-based violence will be solved when the country is no longer structurally unequal absolves the party of addressing violent masculinities (Magadla 2013). This articulated gender discourse of the EFF places emphasis on the view that "economic liberation will deliver both genders, especially women, from present white and black patriarchal tyranny. This framing of gender, which is actually just reduced to the 'empowerment' of women while saying very little about the need to seriously reconfigure current masculinities, assumes that economic liberation is the cure for patriarchy" (Magadla 2013).

I believe the reasons for this particular flaw can be traced back to the party's "ideological outlook and character" (Shivambu and Smith 2014:76). Ideological character and clarity are important to the EFF. As noted within its documents, constant ideological engagements help the party "to grow and understand itself and society better, and most importantly, ideological discussions and reflections help in the clarification of tasks ahead" (Shivambu and Smith 2014:76).

In the constitution of the EFF adopted in 2013 at their National Assembly, they state that they are theoretically and politically guided by Marxist, Leninist and Fanonian these ideological and theoretical traditions (Shivambu and Smith 2014:77). These interpretative lenses will influence the political programme of the party which is "the complete overthrow of the neoliberal anti-black state as well as the bourgeoisie and all other exploiting classes" in order to achieve "the triumph of socialism over capitalism" (Shivambu and Smith 2014:77). What is telling within this political program, again, is its privileging of race and class analysis, while the fact that the South African state is not only "neoliberal [and] anti-black" is masked. As demonstrated by Pheko, Black women in South Africa have been the most structurally impoverished group due to "institutions, policies and systems within an economy that entrenches patriarchy and a fundamentalist brand of neoliberalism" (2010), yet the EFF fails to acknowledge this in its articulation of political and economic oppression.

In 1949 Claudia Vera Cumberbatch Jones, wrote an essay titled: "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women". Jones was born in 1915 and was the "only Black woman

on the central committee of the Communist Party USA and Secretary of the Women's Commission in 1947" (Davies 2015). In reference to the Communist Party and Marxist-Leninist understanding, within this essay Jones remarked:

> We must end this failure to create an atmosphere in our clubs in which new recruits this case Negro women-are confronted with the "silent treatment" or with attempts to "blueprint" them into a pattern. (1949, 18)

Jones was an activist, political mobiliser, journalist and intellectual who "met world leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Mao Tse-Tung, Norman Manley, Cheddi Jagan, and Jomo Kenyatta" (Davies 2015). Sadly, the pattern to "blueprint" Black women's lives and struggles within Marxist-Leninism theory and political parties that subscribe to this theory has not been effectively broken by the EFF in their ideological grounding. Subsequently, Vetten noted that "the marriage between feminism and socialism – including the EFF's version of choice, Marxist-Leninism – has never been a happy one. A strong commitment to practising gender equality seems unlikely in this context" (2016).

The EFF's characterisation of national struggles and of struggles against colonialism and capitalism is an example of how "the studies on African nationalism suffer from absence of an analysis of the intellectual contributions of women in liberation struggles" (April, 2012: 38). A mention of feminism occurs in Shivambu and Smith's book titled *The Coming Revolution*: *Julius Malema and the FIGHT for ECONOMIC FREEDOM,* however it is not included in the publically accessible documents of the party available on its website. Shivambu notes that the EFF and "revolutionaries adopt a materialistic feminist concept of the gender problem which departs from an emphasis on the patronising liberal discourse of a rights-based approach" (2014:99). Shivambu and Smith's call to "adopt a materialistic feminist concept" to gender justice, again speaks to the EFF's lack of engagement with the intellectual contributions of Black women who have spoken to the omissions of this concept.

In 1974, a Black Feminist socialist collective was formed in the United States called the Combahee River Collective. They released a statement highlighting that:

> We realize that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy… Material resources must be equally distributed among those who create these resources. We are not convinced, however, that a socialist revolution that is not also a feminist and anti-racist revolution will guarantee our liberation…. We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers, but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives. Although we are in essential agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed, we know that his analysis must be extended further in order for us to understand our specific economic situation as Black women. (1977)

From this perspective, my contention with the EFF's articulated gender outlook is due to the fact that it fails to theoretically engage the lived experiences of Black women, interpretative lenses developed by Black women in order to achieve a just society. For instance, the EFF's documents acknowledge how neoliberal policies have affected the Black South African population however they have omitted the crucial gendered dynamics of the neoliberal system. The problem is there is a language that is used within the party in its key texts, a language that is learned in the organisation through political education and programs; however this language is not efficiently gendered. We also see this in the EFF's founding manifesto, when they provide an analysis of economic conditions, socio-economic challenges such as healthcare and housing; within these documents they are able to provide a class and racial analysis of these challenges, while simultaneously presenting them as gender neutral.

When people come into the EFF, most of them do not come into the organisation understanding the intricacies of race and class dynamics in South Africa. That language is taught and developed through party structures and processes such as political education and political inductions. Therefore members of the EFF, if given a chance to receive political education from their branches or from external sources would then also able to understand how the intersections of class and race function as tools of oppression on an everyday level. They are less exposed to understanding how our capitalist and racialized economy and society intersects with gendered oppression, on an everyday level. It is insufficient for the EFF to simply highlight "patriarchy" or "sexism" as systems of

oppression within its key organisational texts, within the party there is an urgent need to develop a language and theoretical standpoint to gendered oppression amongst Black people that will deepen the organisations understanding of gendered oppression and advocacy for gender justice

This lack of a theoretical grounding to gendered oppression within the EFF's gender is discourse has also been translated to gender neutral analysis offered by party leaders. An example of this lack can be found in the opening address by the CIC at the 2017 EFF plenum. While giving the address on the political context of the country and the world, from the weakening of a neoliberal world order, the anniversary of the constitution, the Syrian crisis, the local government elections and other issues. I waited for a gendered analysis of this political context. But it never came.

At the same plenum, I witnessed a student leader of the EFF, Naledi Chirwa and a participant in this research process, question the silences on gendered aspects of the economic system. I was sitting next to Chirwa during that moment. We listened to the Deputy President of the EFF, Floyd Shivambu give a presentation on the "nature of capitalism in South Africa". During the presentation, Shivambu highlighted the colonial and therefore racialised nature of the development of South African capitalism, he quoted the Oxfam report previously referenced in this paper which states that "three white men own the same wealth as the bottom half" of our population (2017). During this presentation, Chirwa and I exchanged notes regarding his omission that South African capitalism is not only colonial or racial, but deeply gendered. She asked me to bring it up in the question and answer session. I reminded her that I could not because I was not an official delegate at the plenum. I attended the plenum because I wanted to be able to engage as many Black women from different provinces as possible for the purposes of the study, without the travel costs as I had no research funding for this project. The Deputy Secretary General- Hlengiwe Hlophe allowed me to attend because I offered to volunteer with the logistics team while I was at the plenum.

It was not an easy decision to make for Chirwa to question the Deputy President (DP) of the party, she contemplated it but finally got up and spoke. We already had our in-depth

conversation for the purposes of the study were formal consent was granted, at the plenum I asked her to record her question and she agreed. The question she posed was:

> It was not hard to notice how the manifestation of capitalism is actually so gendered. You know, I mean, even in the top 3 wealthiest people, there's no female. And we have to be cognizant of that as well. Also state and political power, it's fitted into a male figure and that also has to be addressed, you know. And I would like to know what the Deputy President's perception is, specifically on gendered capitalism. (Chirwa, 2017)

When she sat down, I immediately said to her "Leadership! Leader!" with pride because I did not take her courage for granted; to challenge the erasure of gender in a presentation given by the DP of the party did not come with ease. This moment reminded me of a speech given by Audre Lorde in 1977 at the Lesbian and Literature panel of the Modern Language Association meeting (1978:40). In the lecture, Lorde notes: "I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect […] Your silence will not protect you" (1978: 40- 41). When Chirwa spoke, she highlighted a crucial lack of the party theoretical grounding, with fear but she spoke. Shivambu responded positively to Chirwa's comment, saying that she was correct and that he should have included the patriarchal nature of capitalism in his presentation, however this omission should be avoided not only in party texts but in presentations like the one he gave at the plenum.

In the conversations I held with Black women leaders of the party; I highlighted this lack of ideological clarity when it comes to gender. I also reminded them of Chirwa's intervention at the plenum. One of the leaders told me that I need to refer to the party's manifesto and my response was that it was a small paragraph. She said:

> It's a very small portion... as small as it is, it's loud. That we need to break the patriarchal barriers. It's very loud. It touches on it, as much as men, the founding manifesto was written mostly I think by DP. He is a man. But for him to even to arrive to a point of saying, in our founding manifesto we need to recognize that we have this barrier of patriarchy. It has to be here. Even if he didn't get then to express himself further and elaborate more on it. But mna I appreciate the fact that he thought about it being a man, with another man establishing this thing.....

> Then as time goes on we need to revisit that, and say but we promised to break this barrier. We need to do something about it. (Interview with Mente 2017)

I agree with Mente to some extent, I agree that it is important that gender was mentioned in the party's founding manifesto because in the formation of previous national liberation movements, gender was not touched on at all. Furthermore, when the DP of the party highlighted the ways in which capitalism was patriarchal in a room filled with leaders of the EFF from different parts of the country, it was an important moment. However this should be a norm within the EFF and the language/analysis should be expanded and detailed. The racialised and gendered aspects of capitalist exploitation should not only be addressed in spaces such as plenum but it should be explicitly shown in EFF documents and texts. This analysis should be a norm in their public articulations of our economic and political context as well as in EFF branches, particularly through political education and programmes. This language needs to become constant. No longer can we be satisfied with political leaders and organisations committing to challenging patriarchy in principle, this commitment needs to be articulated constantly, at every level in order to achieve a holistic understanding of the freedom we are striving for.

In speaking to holistic forms of freedom, at the same EFF plenum in 2017, a Black woman leader of the party proposed a program on Black Queer rights for the party to carry out at branch levels across the country. The spokesperson of the party and Member of Parliament (MP) Mbuyiseni Ndlozi responded by stating that "this is a complex question, I am not sure that our organisation is prepared for that. We haven't dealt with it ideologically" (2017). Furthermore, he highlighted that: "I know my comrades are not so strong, I can trust you with workers' rights" (2017).

This acknowledgement by Ndlozi calls for action instead of symbolic gestures of the party. One such gesture that I asked the party to perform was during the 2015 Johannesburg People's Pride (JPP) where I drafted an email that appealed to the party to publish a statement of support to JPP and the party did so. JPP "came about because of what Pride protest celebrations in South Africa have become. They are usually de-politicised, with an increasing move towards being commercialised at the expense of all LGBTIQ people. We believe that Pride needs to return to its political roots and organise for freedom of all people. We believe in a world where all are free. We believe that while class, race, gender,

and sexuality inequalities continue to exist, none are free" (JPP 2013). In the statement published by the EFF, it noted that:

> The EFF welcomes and supports the third annual Johannesburg People's Pride event happening today, because we recognize that all forms of oppression matter…….We recognize that black gender non-conforming people are further marginalized within the economy as it relates to job, entrepreneurial and educational opportunities. The EFF's call for economic freedom in our lifetime must therefore be understood to also mean economic freedom for those who are marginalized on the basis of their sexual identity. (EFF 2015)

I was proud that the party responded positively and publicised a message of support to JPP, this was an important act. Newspapers such as *Sowetan* reported on the party's show of support in a heading which stated: "Saturday's third Johannesburg's People's Pride event received support from what some might consider a rather surprising quarter – the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)" (2015). Its telling that the media expressed shock with the party's show of solidarity, media platforms and the Queer Black community can no longer be surprised at such symbolic forms of support of the from the EFF. However, solidarity from the party needs to go beyond symbolic gestures, it needs to be evident in the party's discourse and programmes.

In *African Sexualities: A Reader*, Tamale notes how the African Union in 1994 had adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa as well as the Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Maputo (2011: 3). However, she notes that "although these policies are numerous, missing are the theoretical and practical sparks to ignite the commitment required from both state and non-state actors to implement them" (2011: 3). Therefore, it becomes important for the EFF to fill up the political vacuum in relation to the politicisation of Black Queer struggles in the country. A vacuum that has resulted in the marginalisation of Queer Black people in the economy, law, public health care, and education and other avenues.

Recently, Iranti-org which "is a media advocacy organization that defends the rights of Lesbians, Transgender and Intersex persons in Africa" reported that "a victim of sexual violence was allegedly evicted from a women's shelter in Braamfontein, due to her identity as a transgender woman" in Johannesburg (2017). In their press release, they also noted how they are calling for "accommodation and shelter which respects the

identity of transgender and gender diverse victims to be provided, as well as a revision of South Africa's policy on shelters" which "makes no mention or concession toward transgender or gender-diverse persons" (Iranti-org 2017). Furthermore, this national political vacuum has also resulted in the violent murders and assaults that Queer Black people have suffered in South Africa. In 2016, again Iranti-org further wrote a statement challenging the silences of mainstream media and politicians in relation to the human rights violations that Queer Black youth are experiencing in townships (2016). They expressed that:

> Almost on a weekly basis Iranti-org deals with yet another LGBTI young person who has been either expelled from school or worse; brutally murdered….. If justice is what love looks like in public and yet there is no justice for LGBTI youth in South Africa, then what does this say about who South Africa loves? (Iranti-org, 2016).

If the EFF is truly committed to fighting for the dignity of Black South Africans, then it needs to prove to the Black Queer community in the country that it truly cares, not only through political gestures but through political action. As noted by Stella Nyanzi, "although sexuality is largely a private and personal affair, the sexual terrain is also political" (2011: 477).

In 2014, EFF member, auditor and activist Cameron Modisane wrote an opinion piece titled: "EFF Fights for LGBTI Rights". In the piece, Modisane notes that "in 2013, I had the privilege of marrying the love of my life in what was dubbed by the media as the first 'African traditional gay wedding ceremony' based on African culture and rituals" (2014). Additionally, Modisane argued why he had faith in the EFF to politically champion Queer rights in South Africa. He noted that: "it is comforting that a political organisation such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) has taken a position which seeks to champion and fight for the rights of the LGBTI community [….] the EFF hosted its first ever 'Minority Group Seminar' in Braamfontien, where it included the LGBTI community […] During the seminar the EFF Gauteng Premier Candidate Adv. Dali Mpofu unequivocally re-emphasised EFF's position in fighting for full realisation of rights for the LGBTI community" (2014). This year, I engaged with Modisane through email and social media asking him about the progress of the party in relation to this work, since he was heavily involved in 2013 and 2014. He noted how he assisted in compiling documents and action

plans in relation to this work, he also mentioned the people he was working with. However, he sadly noted that: "but all [that work] seems to have faded now" (Modisane 2017). African Feminists and Queer persons on the continent have long theorised and written of their commitment to the fight against colonialism, imperialism, heteronormative patriarchy and capitalism that could help guide the party's ideology. Furthermore the party needs to demonstrate a sustained commitment to politically advocating for Black Queer rights to avoid the repetition that Modisane retells.

I return to Shivambu's presentation on the "nature of capitalism", where he also highlighted that a successful revolution can be achieved through "ideological commitment and consistency" coupled with "mass power mobilised behind the ideological commitment" (2017). Therefore, this ideological commitment to fight against capitalism and racism needs to be attached to an ideological commitment and clarity to fight patriarchy and heteronormativity. These ideological omissions have been evident in the party's 2016 Local Government Election manifesto. A Southern African NGO called Gender Links conducted a study titled: "Gender and the South African Local Government Elections 2016 Briefing Note 1 – Gender & Political Party Manifestos" (2016). This study depressingly showed how within the EFF's manifesto "no reference is made to women or gender equality" (2016:6). The organisation continued to note that the:

> Envisaged land reform programme speaks of equitable allocation of land for residential purposes, but does not address the issue of current land reform mechanisms and processes, envisaged land tenure and ownership models, and current flawed approaches to addressing challenges experienced by women in securing access to and ownership of land. Local economic development measures are silent on issues relating to women's economic empowerment and overcoming structural challenges to women's participation in the economy, although women would stand to benefit from envisaged measures to support informal. (Gender Links, 2016:6)

I believe that such failures could be avoided if the party invested in mainstreaming gender in the party's ideological and theoretical grounding. Within this study by Gender Links, they also highlighted how the EFF was even surpassed by the ANC and the United Democratic Movement (UDM) which both made minimal attempts to ensuring that gender was mentioned in their manifesto as highlighted in **Table 1** (2016:5).

Gender awareness rating – Voice, Choice, Control

Score out of five	ANC	COPE	DA	EFF	FF+	IFP	UDM
1) The importance of women's participation is highlighted and there are strategies for addressing this, including affirmative action.	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
2) There is a gendered analysis of local economic development and specific strategies for addressing women's equal access and participation.	3	4	2	2	1	1	3
3) There is a gendered analysis of access to resources such as land, housing, and credit and how to redress these gaps.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4) There is a gendered analysis of access to services such as water, energy and sanitation and how to ensure that women and men access these equally.	4	2	2	2	1	1	2
5) There is a gender analysis of social challenges, especially GBV, HIV and AIDS, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and how to ensure that local government promotes women's rights.	2	1	1	1	1	2	1
TOTAL out of 25	11	9	7	7	5	6	10
% (Score x 4)	44%	36%	28%	28%	20%	24%	40%

Table 1. Gender Awareness Rating from Gender Links 2016

Gender Links placed the ANC as the leading political party which promoted gender awareness in their election manifesto with 44%, and the EFF and the Democratic Alliance (DA) were both placed at 4th place with 28% (2016:7). These outcomes should be a disappointment to the party, particularly because it has told people in the country that it is a political alternative that will improve the conditions of all Black people in the country, yet this rating paints a different picture. As mentioned by Malema "it's important for putting systems in place in order to build an organisation" (2017). Therefore, regarding the party's political and ideological grounding, systems need to be put in place in order to mainstream gendered oppression in the language and political discourse of the party. Systems that will further the holistic aims of Black emancipation.

As indicated by the party:

> The EFF finally liberates Marxism and Leninism from the racist mind-set that dictates that the African and black experiences must be viewed from the Western perspective and the horrors of anti-black racism and colonialism are reduced to a mere epiphenomenon. Bringing Fanon onto the duet of Marx and Lenin completes the anti-capitalist, ant-imperialist and anti-racist circle that is the only real basis for true liberation. (Shivambu, 2014:78)

While I was reflecting on the paragraph above, it honestly brought disappointment to me as a Black woman in the party, as well as disappointment for other Black women who mobilise and have faith in the movement. This feeling stems from seeing how the party is able to recognise the racial gaps in the theoretical grounding of Marx and Lenin by making the decision to bring in Fanon. Yet, they do not recognise the gendered gap in the masculinist lens of the theoretical grounding of all three of the men that guide their political direction. Judging by this paragraph, we see that once more "the real basis of true liberation" is one that excludes Black women and Black Queer bodies. Therefore, the EFF has a limited articulation of gendered oppression in South Africa within its foundational texts such as the founding manifesto and constitution of the EFF. This limited articulation of gendered oppression has influenced its political program and election manifesto, therefore this area needs to be corrected by the party.

In conclusion, African women have consistently expressed a strong commitment to the need economic emancipation, or to make use the words of the EFF "economic freedom", for African people. They have articulated a form of thinking that mirrors the EFF's own principles, without placing gender in the margins. For instance, Ama Ata Aidoo states:

> When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I not only answer yes, but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist—especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives, and the burden of African development. It is not possible to advocate independence for the African continent without also believing that African women must have the best that the environment can offer. For some of us, this is the crucial element in our feminism. (1992, 325).

I highlight Aidoo's reflections here to demonstrate the voices of African women available to the EFF to influence their theoretical and interpretation tools. Therefore, the EFF needs to look towards these voices.

3.2 "No Male Will Replace a Female": EFF's Commitment to Gender Parity

Figure1. Economic Freedom Fighters First Press Conference from *SABC News,* 2013

The image above was our first visual encounter of the EFF as a new political formation. These pictures were taken on the 11th of July in 2013 in Johannesburg, where the party introduced themselves to the country. Their aesthetic was very masculine, a look at the picture of the launch, there were only three women present. They were: Mandisa Makhesini, Leigh-Ann Mathys and Hlengiwe Hlophe who all remain in the leadership structures of the EFF today. It is important to highlight the few women in their first press conference because this shows us that this was not seen to be problematic to the founders of this new party. The EFF's very first public picture, why is it that out of that group, very few women made it as part of the "inside group"? It is an important factor to highlight given our gendered political history in South Africa. When the ANC was formed in 1912, women were excluded from accessing full membership of the party within their constitution, that remained so for 30 years, however women served as auxiliary members making input on deliberations and campaigns of the organisation (Ginwala 1990: 77).

Black women's access and belonging in political spaces has gendered relations which are tied to notions of citizenship. Desiree Lewis details how women's citizenship in relation to the nation states, which speaks to "individual freedom, justice, the exercise of political power, economic resources and an available national heritage" has always been shaped by gender and gendered forms of belonging (1999:38). Similarly, Lindiwe Makhunga noted that women were denied participation in formal politics "based on problematic assumptions and deeply embedded biases in the public imagination of what women's roles in society entail as well as simplistic dichotomies about gendered difference that perpetuate the notion that women are not suited to political life, hard politics or war

politics" (2015: 45). Lewis continues to highlight the contradictory relationship between Black women in liberation movements and their belonging to the 'nation'. Lewis argues that "defining women in relation to the community and nation has reinforced traditions in which women's citizenship is mediated by their subordination to men and their symbolic role" (1999:38). Furthermore, Lewis argues that women's roles and positions in the nation have also been relegated to that of the domestic, to the familial where the "mother of the nation" trope comes forth which further inscribes a women's relationship to the nation (1999:39).

Due to movement building efforts by African women's movements and women's groups, the character of politics has significantly changed since the dawn of independence in the continent, with more and more women occupying formal political positions in our political sphere. However, one cannot help but question how this masculinist domination and limited representation of women was possible for the EFF in 2013, especially with the vast literature on the failures of national liberation movements to take gender seriously as an institutional practice in the African continent. Likewise, how was it possible in 2013 for young leaders who claimed to be distancing themselves from ANC that only three women make it to the public launch of the party, when they had awareness that women did not make the "inside group" in 1912? The image above will be part of a moment that will be written about in history books should the EFF succeed in ousting the ANC from political power.

However, it must be noted that since the party's formation in 2013, that heavy masculinist aesthetic has diminished and we have seen a significant increase in the presence of women within the party structures of the EFF. In speaking to the second research question of this study, which is: "does the EFF provide an enabling environment for women to thrive within the party and for the advancement of gender justice more broadly". The EFF has used gender representation quotas as a vehicle to provide an enabling environment for women in the party. As noted by Ndlozi at seminar uploaded on the EFF's YouTube page, "we don't think the quota system is the be and all, but it has assisted us in most of the cases to guard against being a gentlemen's choir or a boys club" (2015).

In the 2014 National and Provincial Government Elections, the party boasted that its candidate list had "99% gender parity" (Polity 2014). In the 2016 Local Government Elections analysis by Gender Links, it shows us that the EFF was the leading political party to achieve gender parity within their party lists with 49% of the party's 909 candidates being women as **Table 2** indicates (2016: 5). The EFF maintained its leading position in relation to gender parity in the outcomes of the elections. As further indicated by Gender Links, 49% of the EFF's elected candidates were women "however, this is thanks largely to its strong performance in the PR [Proportional Representation] seats (50%). The EFF performed dismally on gender in the ward seats (18%). Overall, with less than 10% of the seats, this still guaranteed EFF first place on gender" (2016: 26). These gender parity outcomes are important for the EFF because as Hassim puts forward, the ability for women to occupy positions in formal political institutions can facilitate and "signal that there is room for women's agency to shape politics, and that formal political rights are an important precondition for advancing equitable social policies" (2002: 1).

Table 9: Gender outcomes of the 2016 SA local elections by party and electoral system

Political Party	PR				WARD				Total	Total Men	Total Female	Average % women
	Male	Female	Total	% women	Male	Female	Total	% women				
Overall	3 012	2 835	5 847	48%	3 004	1 384	4 388	32%	10 235	6 016	4 219	41%
EFF	452	446	898	50%	9	2	11	18%	909	461	448	49%
ANC	1 070	1 664	2 734	61%	2 323	1 087	3 410	32%	6 144	3 393	2 751	45%
COPE	31	18	49	37%	1	-	1	0%	50	32	18	36%
DA	885	461	1 346	34%	460	279	739	38%	2 085	1 345	740	35%
OTHERS	287	103	390	26%	10	3	13	23%	403	297	106	26%
IFP	215	121	336	36%	175	10	185	5%	521	390	131	25%
UDM	53	18	71	25%	2	-	2	0%	73	55	18	25%
INDEPENDENTS	-	1	1	100%	24	3	27	11%	28	24	4	14%
ACDP	19	3	22	14%	-	-	-	0%	22	19	3	14%

Table2. Gender Outcomes of the 2016 Local Elections by Gender Links, 2016: 25

The party's commitment to gender parity was also emphasised in the recent EFF plenum that I attended where Julius Malema articulated that "no male replaces a female" to delegates attending the plenum (2017). Malema was making reference to elected councillors that pass on or resign from their positions in the party. This principle was also affirmed in the conversations that I had with Black women leading in the EFF. For instance, in our conversation Veronica Mente reaffirmed that:

> In the EFF, it's allowed that the list can start with a woman followed by a woman. But it's not allowed that a list can start will a man followed by another man, no. Women might be 60%, men can be 40% but don't bring us two men, rather bring us two females. That is a standing procedure of the EFF. (2017)

Mente's words are reaffirmed by actual numbers, for instance in the North West province, 64% of the EFF elected councillors are women. Mandisa Mashego said in our conversation that the party had not planned for this outcome, she noted that:

> We [the EFF] were planning 50/50, we were not planning 60/40. So it just so happened that the women emerged. And because of patriarchy, that is the one area where you can rest assured that those women emerged organically. Because remember we are naturally patriarchal as a society, women ourselves, we look down on each other. So, we tend to want to promote men. (2017)

The EFF's internal political will to achieve gender parity becomes a notable achievement because as Gender Links affirms: "in the absence of a quota mechanism, South Africa relies entirely on the commitment of individual political parties to promote women's representation" (2016:26). These numbers are also a norm in party leadership structures at national, regional and branch level which demonstrate the party's commitment in achieving equal gender representation. This is a notable factor because women in politics are under-represented in party and national leadership positions, although South Africa fairs high in relation to the international scale (CGE 2013). Therefore, whether in parliament or municipal councils, there is a strong representation of Black women in the EFF which has facilitated an enabling environment for them to thrive in relation to leadership roles

The representation of Black women is also evident in internal party structures at national, provincial and regional structures. The increased representation of Black women in politics in the African continent as well as the EFF is due to the legacy of women's activism and movements. As Hassim puts forward: "women's representation in African parliaments has increased sharply as a result of a deliberate strategy adopted by many women's movements to support the use of quotas" (2005: 1). However the EFF's commitment to gender parity cannot be celebrated whole heartedly, as Mama argues, some of the most powerful leaders and institutions in the African continent, have reduced the call for gender justice into "a numbers game" which "evade the deeper issues of institutional and intellectual transformation, feeling that they have addressed the matter by buying into the numbers game" (2002: 3).

Lewis details how this came to being, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa. She observes that women's representation in formal politics has been shaped by "patriarchal elite manipulation" and liberal notions of feminism (2007:22). Lewis puts forward that South African gender discourse was impacted by "gender mainstreaming in the wake of the Beijing Conference of 1995" (2007:22). This facilitated an environment where the influence of US and European founded NGOs and governments that supported the most work on gender, tended to privilege the lobbying of governments and political parties to commit to quotas and far less on how to change institutional and patriarchal political cultures (Lewis 2007:22). Therefore equal access and representation, measured in numbers was privileged beyond actual institutional transformation.

Moreover, the language adopted was "an extremely brittle language about gender" which made use of "terms such as 'gender-aware', 'gender sensitivity', 'gender focal point', 'gender disaggregated data' or 'women's empowerment' [to] take the place of a feminist language that gestures towards processes, towards what is complicatedly social and humanistic" (Lewis 2007:22). Elaine Salo and Desire Lewis caution us in equating gender justice to solely numbers, they demonstrate that "in South Africa and Uganda, for example, women's representation in parliament has rapidly increased over the past few years, and yet the policies for improving women's rights are by no means commensurate with the growth in the number of women parliamentarians" (2002: 4).

Sylvia Tamale references Segers (1983) and states that efforts to achieve gender representation through quotas "a single policy […] a lonely policy, a voice in the wilderness", that can have minor achievements "without the support of other policies directed at reducing disparities in wealth, status, and power (1999:25). Therefore as Black Feminists and African Feminists theories have put forward, political parties such as the EFF cannot only focus on gender representation as a tool for achieving gender justice and creating an enabling environment for Black women in the party. Instead, in addition to gender representation, organisations such as the EFF need to invest in African Feminist theoretical and policy agendas, in order to achieve substantial political change within their structures and in the broader society (Tamale 1999:25).

4. Methodological Framework

4.1 "An African Feminist Standpoint?"

In *GUGULE-TOIS, IT'S THE PLACE TO BE! On Bodies, Sex, Respectability and Social Reproduction: Women's Experiences of Youth on Cape Town's Periphery* Danai Mupotsa makes use of an "African feminist standpoint" as the research method in her research dissertation with women from Gugulethu aged 12-19 years (2007). She defines this methodological intervention as "placing the 'body', into research and thus challenging the notion that objective knowledge can be achieved" (2007: 51). Central to this standpoint is challenging "male stream" methodology which instructions the researcher to remove themselves from their "research object" and be the voice of authority in the research process in order to produce credible knowledge (Hill Collins 2000). Through referencing Marjorie Mbliyini (1994), Mupotsa details how this method seeks to question:

> Who is doing the research, and about whom; what methods or procedures are used; who owns the tools or assets used in the research production; who defines the problem being studied, constructs the research instruments, interprets the information acquired and writes up the final report; who finances the research; (critically) who is the audience; what forum will be used to present and reproduce the findings (and are the written in a language which is accessible to the larger public); how accessible the findings will be to the population under study; what will be done with the findings and finally, who are the real beneficiaries of the research.[…] They also make it clear that the researcher is a living, breathing and participating part of the world which is being studied. (2007:50)

For the purposes of this research inquiry, I too questioned my own positionality and I explore it within this research, not from an alienated position but from within. I questioned the meaning of researching Black women in the EFF as a Black woman in the EFF and for what purposes. I ensured the Black women who were involved in the study that I would distribute the research inquiry to them after completion because the forum to present this study cannot solely be within the academic institution. I questioned my tone and my "Wits jargon" that has been used to Other Black women and has treated Black women as 'research subjects'. I was sensitive to the caution offered by Hendricks and Lewis that: "black feminists would need to remain sensitive to class, regional and other differences within the category 'black women'. Disregarding these present and evolving

differences would be both irresponsible and counterproductive, and could lead to the intolerance, defensiveness and lack of self-scrutiny which many black women now condemn in white researchers" (1994:73).

The African Feminist Standpoint particularly made me conscious of the idea of difference, and recognising the power dynamics within the conversation and inquiry process. As Mupotsa reminds us "'conducting research,' as a means of accessing academic achievement is something which is done from a particular class position and the "power-play" between "researcher" and "researched" persists and it must continue to be interrogated" (2007: 55). Therefore, I had intense sensitivity to the power dynamics between me and the Black women I was engaging in conversation with. I understood the interpretative power I held as the individual whose name will be on this research report. Intimately as Hendricks and Lewis argue "the interpreter inevitably inscribes her power… [has] autonomy of what is represented" (1994: 70). I understand the power that I have as the woman who will be engaging in the interpretative work of this paper. However, the power dynamics between myself and Black women in the EFF were not clear-cut or from top to bottom. These women held power in terms of being my "Commissars" as we refer to the leaders of the party. Their response to this research project may influence how the research inquiry is received and my membership within the party, as members of the party are told not to act in ways that may cause dispute or attract negative attention towards the party or our membership may be terminated.

The power dynamics were further complicated by the hierarchies of knowledge because it was evident within some of the interviews that I as a Masters Student focused on Black Feminisms and African Feminisms, therefore I could articulate myself in certain ways and I could provide case studies on the history of women's activism within the continent that are not widely distributed in the country. I felt this way after I highlighted the strong lack of gender discourse and the limited representation of women in the EFF in public discourse and one of the woman leaders of the party responded by stating: "…we must be able to conscientise them. But why can't you do that for us? Like, we will get our women together" (2017). I felt that there was a perception that I had privileged knowledge within the conversations on gendered oppression and organising. However, once I started focusing on their work as Black women leaders of the EFF, and their achievements within the party, the moments and details of the party that only 'the leadership' was privy to,

this worked to shift that hierarchy of knowledge. Them telling me their achievements out loud, in a party such as the EFF that "doesn't praise fishes for swimming" reaffirmed to me and them of their power, talent and hard work. The roles and power dynamics shifted and were negotiated in an organic sense, through mutual recognition and through a relationship that did not belittle one another. Instead, our conversations reflected Participatory Action Research within feminist methods where our engagement occurred within an environment where there was care and interest in each other's subjectivity and thoughts. When I asked particular questions in relation to the study, I was not only interested in the productive answers to the questions that I was asking, I was interested to the subjectivity of the Black women leaders of the EFF and they also showed interest in me as an individual. This process facilitated the opening new awareness to the EFF and to social, political and personal questions. Therefore our engagements were a conscientising process for us, the ordinary experiences that we shared and retold helped to mobilise a sense of what was shared between "us" and how we come to understand our social and political locations (Allen 2011; Maple and Edwards 2010).

In *Vela Bambhentsele: Intimacies and Complexities in Researching within Black Lesbian Groups in Johannesburg,* Zethu Matebeni engages with her position of "researching from the inside" (2008: 90). In this paper, Matebeni details her experience of engaging in research "within one's group" and the opportunities and complexities that arose (2008:90). I too was researching within my group, not only as a Black woman but as a woman who shares the same political party affiliation with the women I was in conversation with. Like Matebeni, I too found that my location offered me numerous opportunities. The first opening I was offered was access to the party and the Black women leaders I was in conversation with. When I made the Secretary General of the EFF aware of my research topic, he mentioned that he was always available if I needed documents or contact details of Black women within the party.

I had also built up a relationship with Black women leaders of the EFF prior to my research process. While working in parliament for instance, the Deputy Secretary General of the EFF, Hlengiwe Hlope allowed me to live with her in her parliamentary residence while I looked for my own place. Therefore asking to be in conversation with her for the study did not fall within an orthodox research process where I had to go through multiple

avenues to access her contact details. I simply sent her email communication. We continued to communicate through text messages to arrange a time after I sent her a 'formal' request. Our meeting felt like a reunion, once more we reconnected in her living space, her hotel room to host our conversation.

Furthermore, being a member of the party allowed me to gain access to party events and gatherings where 'outsiders' were not allowed. My insider position in the party allowed me the access information that I would never have received without my party membership and the fact that I was a former employee of the party. For instance, entering an EFF plenum that is only reserved for delegates and leaders of the party would have not been possible if I was not an active member and former employee of the party. The first time I attended an EFF plenum was in 2016 upon invitation to contribute to the discussion on the election manifesto and the EFF year program. The second time, which was this year I requested to attend in order to conduct interviews with Black women who lived outside Gauteng because I could not afford to travel. I volunteered to help with logistics while I was there and the party agreed. Those who attend the EFF plenums are strictly party delegates and staff. The media is not even allowed at the EFF plenums, they are allowed only for a photo moment of the event. Delegates are told not to publicly share documents received. Delegates were only allowed to share photo moments and videos. The party was aware of my research inquiry and allowed me to engage in participatory observations for the study. The party also wrote a letter acknowledging their awareness of the study and their given permission to engage in participatory observations, this letter from the party was also sent to the ethics committee at the university. Having access to these and other party events allowed me to engage in deeper participatory observations on the culture of the EFF in relation to gender.

In *When Black Is Not Enough: Doing Field Research among Gullah Women*, Josephine Beoku-Betts details the complexities that arise even with the Black Feminist "'insider-status' and 'outsider-within' standpoints" (1994: 413). Beoku-Betts points out that "compared to a researcher with outsider status, a researcher with insider status is viewed as bringing a special sensitivity and engagement in the research process because of the shared experience and understanding of rules of conduct and nuances of behaviour associated with that shared reality" furthermore, an "insider status is also less likely to

generate distrust and hostility from research participants" (1994: 416). This was particularly true in my case as my insider position also allowed me access to other Black women leaders of the EFF that I was not familiar with. For instance, I conducted three conversations with women from the Western Cape and the Tshwane region that I only met at the 2017 EFF plenum, because I had been helping them with their accommodation, and I saw them at dinner and lunches, therefore asking for a moment of their time to speak with me regarding my research was not difficult. I detailed the intensions of the study with them, provided the supporting documents for consent, they gave me their consent and allowed me to record it without difficultly. . There was no articulated level of distrust because they saw me as one of them.

However, Beoku-Betts notes that engaging with Black women who you share racialised and gendered subjectivity is complex and not clear cut. She challenges the sameness of Black womanhood and notes the interplay of our multiple identities as Black women that complicate the research process, these other factors that could differentiate us are "professional/class status, gender, marital status, religious and cultural history" (1994: 414). Therefore within my own research process, I was sensitive to my age, level of education, language and class and I believe so were some of the women I was in conversation with. For instance, EFF Gauteng Acting Chair and Member of the Gauteng Legislature, Mandisa Mashego and I met at a Braamfontein restaurant for our conversation, upon her request. Mashego was aware of her class position as well as mine, because I am a full-time student. During our meeting, this became evident when she turned down my offer to contribute to the bill after our conversation had ended at the restaurant. She noted that I am "a student" and affording lunches in middle-class eating establishments is not a luxury that I had. This relationship was different to an example offered by Hendricks and Lewis, which is as follows: "for example, black middle-class feminists speak for black working-class women or where black academics represent black underclasses" (1994: 70).

I was also sensitive to language, for instance I understood that MP and member of the Central Command Team (CCT), Primrose Sonti is able to express herself best in her home language of isiXhosa. IsiXhosa is my home language too which allowed us to communicate without complication. This awareness came from our history; as I worked with Sonti prior to the EFF as a television producer in Marikana where she was a community activist.

I also knew her language preferences from working with her in parliament in the EFF research team. In parliament, the research team that works with her to prepare speeches also understands this. One of their researchers recently told me how they continue to prepare her speeches for easier translation to isiXhosa and Sonti does her translations herself.

We held our conversation completely in isiXhosa, with a few English words added here and there. Because I could understand and communicate in isiZulu, I also conversed with other Black women leaders of the EFF in the language although English dominated our conversation. The ability to communicate with your participants in their preferred language brings comfort and deeper understanding. However, it also brings about complication particularly in the process of translation, as meaning can get lost. Through translation, as Puleng Segalo argues, we can provide alternative meanings to original statements and this "shift in voice through this process is often a form of silencing" (2013:136). Therefore it becomes an ethical necessity to ensure that the original intended statement remains intact through translation from one language to another. Although I understand isiXhosa because it is my home language, and isiZulu because of my ability to communicate in the language, I had an ethical requirement for the meaning in the statements articulated by my participants in isiXhosa or isiZulu to remain intact. Therefore, I cross-checked my translations with those with better authority on the languages, those that write in isiXhosa constantly such as Xolisa Guzula who is a language and literary specialist and an author.

Language also became a limitation on my end; I remember desperately seeking to engage with two older women from the Limpopo province where EFF enjoys great support. I sat with them casually at the EFF plenum in 2017 during lunch with another commissar I knew, they mostly spoke in sePedi. Although we shared some conversations because I understood the language slightly and I would respond in isiZulu, I recognised that that language would have limited our levels of engagement if I were to be in a substantive conversation with them regarding the research thesis because I could not speak their language. This flaw on my part limited the depth of engagement I could have had with women leaders of the EFF from various backgrounds.

My engagement with Black women in the EFF put me in a position where I had to negotiate other forms of communication; for instance, I had to adopt the party's way of addressing leaders such as "commissar" and titles such as DSG (Deputy Secretary General). I also had to adopt age-based and cultural forms of authority like using the words "mama" and "sisi" in engaging with Black women in the EFF, as I would do in my own community in the Eastern Cape. These forms of authority like "mama" and "sisi" relate to the belief in *ukuhlonipha* which means "to respect". Nthabiseng Motsemme explains this belief as "associated with respect and politeness, [and] is closely linked to African motherhood" (2011:115). If an "outsider" or a non-Black woman or man who were brought up in a different background than mine and were conducting similar research they "might have been less affected by these behavioural expectations, though they might of course have been less likely to gain access in the ways I did" (Beoku-Betts 1994: 418).

4.2 In Conversation With My Commissars: Utilizing Participatory Research Methods

In order to place my African Feminist Standpoint methodology into practice, I engaged in a qualitative research method consisting of multigenerational conversations with nine Black women occupying different leadership positions within the EFF where the intension of the research inquiry was made clear, and formal consent and permission to record our conversations was granted. The engagements that I had with Black women leaders of the EFF felt more than just "interviews" hence I have chosen to use the word "conversation" as a method. For I was not the only one asking questions, they similarly asked what my views were on particular issues on gender and the EFF, as well as questions that were not only related to EFF but where I came from and my future plans . As Mupotsa affirmed in the African Feminist Standpoint, I and the Black women leaders of the EFF placed "the 'body', into research" while we were in conversation (2007: 51). I also selected conversation as a method for reasons stated by Mama, when she highlights that what is considered to be "proper interviewing is about creating a highly artificial social relationship in which the interviewer asks the questions and the interviewee answers and does not ask questions back", my conversations with Black women in the EFF disrupted these research patterns (1995:71).

Within the nine conversations, I conducted six in-depth conversations which lasted for more than an hour and a half each for the purposes of the profiles. I chose to profile women from different ages, the oldest was 56 years old and the youngest was 23 years old. They were born in different provinces in the country. These women have varied leadership positions within the party and they have deployed various strategies in their mobilisation efforts. These Black women leaders have also provided diverse perspectives on their journeys in the EFF and diverse views on the positionality of Black women within politics in democratic South Africa. In the profiles, I will demonstrate and argue that without the efforts of Black women to build this movement, the EFF would not have captured the imagination and the support of over a million Black South Africans in the ways it has done. There are many significant political achievements that these women have achieved within and outside of the EFF, only a few are mentioned in this research inquiry and I will not attempt to limit their efforts and hard work to what I detail within the profiles. In profiling Black women in the EFF, I was interested in a project where I would not only make their narratives visible in an intellectual study; I also sought to engage their ideas, their political subjectivity and their theorisation of gendered relations in politics. I was also interested in their perspectives on Black women in South Africa and Black women within political parties.

Four of these conversations took place at the 2017 EFF plenum in the hotel rooms of different leaders. My conversation with Mandisa Mashego took place at a restaurant in Braamfontein over lunch. The last conversation with Naledi Chirwa took place at two locations, one at a balcony of a shared friend over wine and the other at the EFF plenum during our lunch break. The conversations were semi-structured and open-ended.

From the nine participants, I was in further conversation with three Black women leaders of the EFF that were granted full anonymity within the research study. As stated previously, I met these three leaders at the EFF plenum where consent and full anonymity was granted. Two of the leaders were from different regions in the Western Cape and the third participant was from the Tshwane region. I posed specific questions to them on their perceptions and experiences as women in the party, their views on gender and their feelings on the EFF in relation to the promotion of gender justice. The questions posed in

these conversations drew from three of the four research objectives of the study, which are:

- To examine the experiences of Black women within the EFF
- To evaluate the tangible ways in which women in the EFF access and exercise power.
- To examine how women in the EFF understand and articulate their role in relation to the hierarchy of power within the party.

My approached to the conversations was inspired by a paper titled: "Eliciting Narrative through the In-Depth Interview" by Wendy Hollway and Tony Jefferson (1997). Hollway and Jefferson tackle the implications of researching sensitive topics within "social research methodology and, in particular, for in-depth interviewing" (1997: 54). They make use of the biographical interpretative method which I found valuable for the research inquiry. Although their approach particularly deals with people who have anxiety and a fear of crime, I found this method important because of the sensitivity of some of the questions I sought to engage with while in conversation with Black women leaders in the EFF. We spoke on questions of patriarchy within and externally from the movement that were particularly sensitive. It is sensitive especially in an environment where some of these women leaders expressed senses of fear while on the road in remote areas traveling for election campaigns. They have also experienced instances where they have been undermined by members of their branch while chairing meetings. Furthermore, one shared an experience of being policed for her choice of dress (which was shorts) at an EFF rally. Therefore an orthodox qualitative interview method where "yes" or "no" answers are encouraged was insufficient for my research process. As highlighted by Holloway and Jefferson, within a "traditional question-and-answer format" reflection to questions such as "why", "when", "how did you feel", "what happened", and "what did you do" are missed from the conversation and these are the kinds of responses I was looking for (1997: 56).

As Desiree Lewis notes, in dominant research practices by non-Blacks, "Blacks 'express,' feel, and respond; whites observe, explain, and consolidate their normativeness" (1993: 540). Within this process, in the conversations with Black women leading the EFF, I expressed my own vulnerabilities with them, because I could not ask them to do so

without my own self-reflection as the African Feminist Standpoint advocates. As Harris observes, when Black women document their lives, experiences and reflections it is "for the expansion of their knowledge of self and others (Davies 1999), as well as for sharing this self-discovery device with others. At the same time, the self-ethnographic process is a form of self-reflexivity that is at the core of methodological principles, 'not in terms of self-absorption, but rather in order to use the interrelationships between researcher and other to inform and change social knowledge'" (2005: 39). This observation by Harris reflects some of the experiences that we shared in conversation with Black women leading the EFF.

For instance, EFF Treasurer General, Leigh-Ann Mathys explained that one of the disappointing journeys was:

> When I first got to EFF, there was this perception that I hooked up with [mentions a man's name]. I mean, so there is that thing. So you almost have to prove your keep. It was that thing of, also 'who is she?'. That whole sort of thing…. So now, there is no one in this whole country that can say that I am lazy. Like, you almost have to prove that you capable….I would like to see a change in that sort of attitude. That when we walk in there it's not because ooh okay, she has been deployed here. (2017)

Similarly to Mathys, my access to the EFF events has been justified through my perceived romantic involvement with a party leader. As a young woman who at most times does not confirm to respectability politics, who is unapologetic about wearing lipstick and dresses that are above the knee even at EFF events, I related with what Mathys said. In our conversation, I recalled many moments in EFF spaces, particularly an event that I attended (upon invitation) where one man who is a leader of the EFF and now an MP asked me: "are you [names one of the men leading the EFF]'s girlfriend" and I responded: "no". His response was: "then whose girlfriend are you?", meaning who I was there with that will allow me to gain access to the space. I replied that I was not involved with anyone who was at the gathering. He began to make advances on me; in one moment he mentioned that he was alone in "a nice big hotel room". I told him that I had the best company in my room, my friend Tinyiko Shikwambane who is also a member of the party. He was not aware that I was a member and former researcher of the party and therefore I had to inform him and qualify my presence.

Additionally, within the profiles I have not presented myself as the sole interpreter, analyst, theorists of Black women leading the EFF. I made a methodological and ethical decision to directly quote their own words, analysis, theorisations extensively[4] because I don't wish to continue the cycle of Black women's legacies being only for representational and symbolic value as April informs us has been done to Charlotte Maxeke (2012). Furthermore, I seek to offer room and space for the Black women I am in conversation with to articulate their own political subjectivity, instead of me imposing one onto them as the "researcher". Through the reflections of Black women profiled in this paper, I seek to present them "as makers rather than simply as objects of meaning" (Baderoon 2007:286). As Lewis further exposes, historically "the right to interpret black experience in South Africa has been a white right. Blacks may have emotions and display their experience, but cannot be credited with self-knowledge or interpretive control" (1993: 540). It is within this context therefore that I felt it increasingly important to highlight and centre the voices of Black women in the EFF. In my writing process, questions such as: how do I represent the ideas, experiences and work of these Black women without distortion, were on my mind. I was particularly conscious of this because through knowledge production, Black women's experiences and voices have been erased and distorted by "researchers" who have interpreted our lived experiences.

Lastly, I also spent significant time engaging in participatory observations where I attended EFF events and took notes and at times participate in the conversations. As stated earlier, the party had full awareness of the participatory observations that I was conducting and they provided a letter of support that I provided to the ethics committee at the university. As Leith Mullings notes participatory research "involves working with people, listening and talking to them, and observing them" (2000: 13). Lastly, I also engaged in archival research particularly looking at news pieces and videos on the journey of the EFF as "media portrayals make sense within a broader set of social meanings" (Baderoon 2007:277). Social media also became a great source of information.

4.3 An Ethic of Freedom

[4] I have made them aware of where I have quoted them directly and I have given them the option of anonymity if they so wish.

In “Is It Ethical to Study Africa? Preliminary Thoughts on Scholarship and Freedom”, Amina Mama speaks to the call of an “ethic of freedom” in the research process which must be intertwined with identity, method, ethics and epistemology (2007). This ethic of freedom is rooted in scholarship that “regards itself as integral to the struggle for freedom and holds itself accountable, not to a particular institution, regime, class, or gender, but to the imagination, aspirations, and interests of ordinary people. It is a tradition some would call radical, as it seeks to be socially and politically responsible in more than a neutral or liberal sense” (Mama 2007: 3). As I have mentioned elsewhere within this paper, I hold myself responsible to the community of women in the EFF that have participated in this research. Furthermore, my political intensions are not neutral. Consequently I have expressed my political desire for the liberation of Black women.

Within the ethic of freedom, researchers are called to ponder:

> How do our research activities affect those we study? Can we develop the study of Africa so that it is more respectful toward the lives and struggles of African people and to their agendas, studies that contribute to the good of Africa? (Mama, 2007: 7).

This desire for an ethic of freedom brought with it an extreme vulnerability and anxiety within me, particularly during the writing stage. Questions such as: “will Black women in the EFF feel misrepresented?”; “would I open them up to harm?”; “how can I best maintain their dignity”; “will our relationship be tainted”; “would they hate me?” and “would my membership be terminated because I publicly challenged the party?”, came through my mind. I had to negotiate the tensions that came with being “a researcher”, a member of the party and the tensions of these women being my leaders/commissars and people that I care deeply for. Furthermore, I understood that this research inquiry could not solely be for an academic audience. I have a responsibility to show it to the women who invested their time, ideas, experiences in the project. As well as women in the party from different branches that may benefit from research outcomes. Mama’s call for an “ethic of freedom”, speak with Mupotsa’s “African Feminist Standpoint”.

In her later work, Mupotsa speaks of her experiences in grappling with her “position as a new/student/early career knowledge producer within the African academy and the implications of knowledge production in and on Africa” (2010:2). Recognising these

historical power dynamics and contradictions of being a "researcher" on the continent, Mupotsa references Elina Oinas and Signe Arnfred (2009) who warned "against the tendency to revel in guilt and regret, as 'guilt and regret are lousy companions to research, and apologetic attitudes are similarly useless'"(2010:2). She comes to the conclusion that due to the historically oppressive nature embedded in research on the continent, it has facilitated a personal investment and commitment to her intellectual labours which enables an environment "to write fire…. writing that feels, says, unsays, implies – speaks in silences, is negotiated, contingent, multiple and complex" (2010:15). I too hope to write fire. A fire that defies and seeks to create and imagine a new, within its complications, unease, beauty so that we can imagination at different reality in relation to the political subjectivity of Black women in South African politics.

Black and African Feminist research methods are rooted in the ideas of ethics and dignity to their community that go beyond traditional research ethics. McFadden notes that as African Feminist scholar she is "engaged in the struggle for my rights and the rights and dignity of my sisters" (McFadden 2001: 64). Therefore ensuring the dignity of the women I was in conversation with was important, particularly in how I present the research inquiry. Within our recorded conversations, there were clear moments where I would ask if a certain aspect of our conversation should be not attributed to them. At most times, they said they did not mind their names being attributed to certain statements because they were without fear which I found interesting and powerful. Secondly, I choose to exclude particular names of people that they had made reference to in their arguments and examples, as they could potentially retaliate. Thirdly, we would pause the recording if we decided the conversations went to a direction which was too personal, while we continued talking off record. As Leith Mullings notes, Black Feminist research methods "must reflect the researcher's identification with and responsibilities" towards her community (2000: 28). This is particularly important for reasons of power because historically Black women have had "access to control over how knowledge is presented and represented" (Mullings 2000: 28).

5. Findings: Autobiographical Profiles of Six Women Leaders of the Economic Freedom Fighters

In 2005, Paul Tiyambe Zeleza reflected on the representation of African women's history and literature. He argued that "women remain largely invisible or misrepresented in mainstream, or rather 'malestream,' African history. They are either not present at all, or they are depicted as naturally inferior and subordinate, as eternal victims of male oppression" (2005:207). Black women writers, artists, activists and scholars in Africa have sought to challenge the forms of misrepresentation and erasure that Zeleza speaks of. They have engaged in what Pumla Gqola notes as a feminist principle of post-memory "which is confrontational in its relationship with history and functions 'as a means of redressing the official 'forgetting' of women's histories" (2010:21). I draw from bell hooks' observation of Black women's involvement in historical and imaginative work that's seeks to place our intellectual and political legacies at the centre and not the margins, or "from object to subject" (1992:47). Some of the work that comes to mind includes: *Black South African Women Writers: Narrating the Self, Narrating the Nation* by Barbara Boswell (2010); *Theorising Women: The life of Charlotte Maxeke* by Thozama April (2012); *Women Combatants and the Liberation Movements in South Africa* by Siphokazi Magadla (2015); *Jabavu's Journey* by Makhosazana Xaba (2006), and much more.

In this chapter, I seek to contribute towards post-memory efforts by Black women in South Africa, through profiling six Black women leaders in the EFF. I do so in order to render their efforts in building the EFF visible, as this work has been placed at the margins of our political discourse. Documenting Black women's lives, their political and intellectual legacies become "an important way to utilize their experiences and knowledges, for the expansion of their knowledge of self and others" (Harris 2005:39).

In engaging in a process to profile Black women leading the EFF, I was moved by a poem penned by artist and activist Gcina Mhlophe in 1983 titled: *Say No,* where she remarks:

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
when they give you a back seat in the
liberation wagon
Say No.

Looking at the positionality of Black women in the EFF and how they are profiled in mainstream media and political discourse, through documenting their work, I too needed to "Say No!". To say no at the represented image and growth of the EFF being one that is solely associated with the Black men leaders of the party.

I was inspired by Sylvia Tamale's "Profiles of Five Political Women" in Uganda in her book *When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda* (1999) as well as Angela Davis's book *Women, Race & Class* (1983) where she profiled Black communist women like Lucy Parsons and Claudia Jones. I too wanted to memorialise and profile six Black women leading the EFF who I have had conversations with for the purposes of this research inquiry and have witnessed in action. Within these profiles, I seek to highlight the extraordinary work they have done to build the EFF. Archiving Black women's political efforts becomes crucial because, women leading the EFF have been placed "on the margins of active history making" in mainstream media and political discourse in South Africa (Boswell 2013:36). Therefore, it was important for me to profile "the quiet, unacknowledged ways in which women organise" in the EFF (Boswell 2013: 37).

These profiles come from my awareness of Black women's political agencies to achieve national liberation against colonialism and apartheid in South Africa being looked over. This concealed political and intellectual legacy is not only evident in past historical records, it is also evident in the present where the memory work of narrations of the nation continue to represent narratives that convey that "all leadership is masculine" (Gqola 2011: 74). Therefore, as Black women we continue to be tasked with narrating, recording and writing our stories and other Black women's narratives. This is a task that goes beyond simply recording, it is about claiming back our humanity, for us to be able to define and shape our own lived experiences and futures.

5.1. *Nokulunga Primrose Sonti: Member of Parliament and Member of the CCT*

On the 12 of February 2017, I tweeted that: "EFF women MPs re nameless in the eyes of people who practice 'journalism'. These tweets are all fr[o]m the same night" (Dlakavu, 2017). Within the tweet, shown in **Figure 2** I attached instances from three South African journalists who referred to Black women leaders of the EFF in parliament as "female #EFF MP[s]". All of the tweets by these journalists were from the evening of the 2017 State of the Nation Address (SONA) by Jacob Zuma where the EFF refused to listen to a President that had broken his presidential oath (Masondo 2016). The EFF MP's were violently removed from the parliamentary chamber resulting in injuries (Nicolson 2017).

One of the tweets from a journalist working at News24 indicated that: "Female EFF MP steps in to protect photographer from cops. @News24" with an attached video of the altercation (Etheridge 2017). I responded the tweet by stating that: "Her name is: Tebogo Mokwele #SayHerName" (2017). How could South African media represent Black women in the EFF who are Members of Parliament as nameless? How could the media render a woman and a leader like Mokwele invisible even after she placed her body under further physical threat in order to project a journalist?

Figure 2. Twitter Post on EFF Women MP's, from @SimamkeleD 2017

Nokulunga Primrose Sonti on the other hand, has been one of the most publicly recognised women in the EFF. She is one of the few women leaders of the EFF whose name has consistently appeared in South African media outlets. I have not witnessed a moment where she was referred to as an "EFF Female MP" by South African media outlets. Sonti has been centred on a film *Mama Marikana* (2015) which is a counter-

narrative to the masculinist representation of events that happened in Marikana which resulted in the massacre of mineworkers. Furthermore, her mobilization with women in Marikana has been featured in a documentary by the Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI) titled: *Imbokodo: the Widows of Marikana* (2015). Her media traction has not only been centred on her activism in Marikana, Sonti's image has been featured as a 'rags to riches'[5] story by South African media focusing on her journey as an unemployed grassroots activist in Marikana to being a Member of Parliament.

Sonti has also captured audiences through her ability as a brilliant orator who expresses the challenges of the Black economic underclass from a place of lived experience, often in her home language of isiXhosa. This has led to her speeches in parliament gaining popular traction in South Africa. One such speech was on the experiences of people living in Marikana two years after the massacre. Sonti did not leave her home in Marikana for a manicured life in the suburbs after she was deployed as an EFF member of parliament. Instead she chose to continue living in that community to maintain their strong connection. In her speech in parliament, Sonti highlighted that her words echoed the thoughts of people in Marikana because it was them who requested her to deliver that particular speech on the effects of the massacre. By emphasising that her speech was shared reflections with her community, Sonti spoke to the Black Feminist principle that affirms that often "black women construct a self not only based around individual self-interests, but as part of their community or group" (Brooks 2003: 5).

In the speech, Sonti highlighted the lack of improvement to the living conditions of families in Marikana, stating that "Marikana widows can't feed their children while you are living lavish. You [Jacob Zuma] are heartless and you are a thief" (eNCA, 2015). The speaker of parliament and members of the ANC asked her to withdraw these statements, including her remark that it was ANC leaders who killed miners in Marikana , her response was: "I am not [Mmusi] Maimane, I am Primrose Sonti, *andisoze ndirhoxe* [I will not withdraw]" (2015). After refusing to withdraw her statement, she was asked by the

[5] See a news article by *City Press* titled: "Newsmaker - Primrose Sonti: A journey to Parliament" (2014) accessed on: http://www.news24.com/Archives/City-Press/Newsmaker-Primrose-Sonti-A-journey-to-Parliament-20150429

speaker of parliament, Baleka Mbete to step down from the podium. This particular speech by Sonti has attracted 152,353 views on YouTube at the time of my writing (My Africa 2015).

Sonti's ability to capture audiences it is due to her organic public speaking abilities that she has honed throughout her journey as an activist, which has spanned decades. Unlike some politicians, she has not participated in the hyper capitalised 'public speaking coaching' industry in order to appeal to people. This ability to speak her truth to power and to articulate the struggles of Black people in her community is what captured Malema. It is what drove him to recruit her into the EFF in 2012, when the party was in its infancy. Malema was compelled to seek Sonti's involvement in the EFF after seeing her articulate the struggles of people living in Marikana, days after the massacre in 2012. In conversation with Sonti, she recounted the story of their meeting in isiXhosa which I translated to English:

> I saw Julius Malema before the Marikana Massacre, yes, over the TV. Then the Marikana Massacre happened and he came. I think it was on the 18th August because the massacre happened on the 16th of August. On the 18th, he came to ask for a go-ahead, he wanted to know how he could gain access in order to be able to speak to the workers. So, they allowed him on the 18th and he came. I think I was the person that was representing the community. On the side of the community, we were crying while speaking to him. I spoke to him, I was speaking on the stage, you see. So, days passed and I received a call from leaders of the EFF, I could say. They said that they were sent to me in Wonderkop. They were sent by the President [Malema], that he is asking for us to try and build the organisation. I did not sit down; they expressed this to a person that was already fond of this organisation. So, I started recruiting with the women. All the women of Sikhala Sonke, they were the first women to join EFF in Wonderkop. (Interview with Sonti, DATE 2017).

After seeing her speak that evening in Marikana, it was Malema that ensured that he could get in contact with Sonti. It was her fire that he could not ignore. Based on her narration of the story in the above paragraph, some may assume that it was Malema who introduced the idea of mobilising with the EFF to Sonti. Furthermore, they could draw the assumption that he is the person who "discovered" her, but that would be an incomplete story. In our conversation, Sonti continued to express that:

> I saw a small group on TV that was led by my President, the CIC Julius Malema talking about this new organisation that they are building. From that day, in that hour, while watching the news, I told myself that this will be a movement that I will join. (2017)

In recalling her introduction to the EFF during their first press conference and her decision to join the party, Sonti inserts her own political agency. She reveals that for her, the EFF was an idea and a political home she chose to explore before Malema's invitation. Sonti was involved in party politics for many years, particularly with the ANC. She expressed her disappointment by the party's actions and their treatment of her. Years prior to the formation of the EFF, she made the decision to terminate her relationship with the ANC due to those frustrations. In our conversation, she expressed that instead of being involved in a political party she no longer had faith in; she chose to remain without a political home. In her decision to part with the ANC, Sonti stated that she left: "*ndingayazi ukuthi ndizobheka ngaphi [not knowing where I would go]*" (2017).

In our conversation, I asked Sonti to reflect on the moment when she and Malema met in Marikana and what she believes drove Malema to make the decision to recruit her into the EFF. I mentioned that clearly there was something that moved him to do so. Sonti responded and said:

> Yes, yes, yes. I see that he saw something, because I am just a person who just speaks her mind, you see. Indeed, I spoke, while pointing directly at him[...] I said: 'Julius Malema I am happy that you are in our presence today, that you have come to mourn with us, to feel the pain that we are in. You did not deter, you were not afraid, you came directly to grieve with us'. (2017)

I understood the significance of Malema's visit to Marikana to Sonti and other community/family members who attended the meeting because on the value that Black communities have placed on the act of visiting and mourning with families after a passing of their loved ones. Furthermore, what is important in Sonti's narration is her emphasis on the impact of her agency and voice, a voice that others, like Malema were receptive to. When Sonti says she "pointed" at Malema "directly" while speaking to him, this was an act of subverting imposed behaviours on Black women. She used her agency to "to act within the constraints of her historical location, while simultaneously critically interrogating these constraints and holding the potential for creatively re-envisioning the social structures which check her actions" (Boswell 2011:97).

Earlier, I highlighted cases where Sonti has been featured in South African mainstream discourse. In this act, I do not suggest that Sonti has not been impacted by the relentless erasure of Black women at the hands of South African media. Black women activists and the family members of the men who were killed in Marikana like Sonti have also been impacted by the masculinist heroic gaze of South African media and scholarship. In her work Asanda Benya challenges scholarly analysis on the Marikana Massacre (2015). She argues that for us:

> To fully understand Marikana the event, one has to understand Marikana the location, and hence realities and conditions on the ground. Such an analysis is useful because it sheds light on the space of social reproduction and allows us to look at the position of women who are usually ignored when talking about the mines. The inclusion of women's experiences in the Marikana narrative allows for both a more nuanced reading of the massacre and a broader understanding of what we mean by the 'class struggle', which takes us beyond the point of production. (2015: 546)

Benya utilises the experiences she captured through the conversations she had with women living and mobilising for justice in Marikana soon after the massacre, conversations that lasted more than a year. She showcases how women who had close relationships with the men murdered, injured, arrested due to the massacre such as their wives, girlfriends, 'mistresses', family and community members had supported, mobilised, and protested against the injustice of the extractives and capitalists system.. In an earlier paper, Benya (2013) notes that:

> after the massacre, it was women who were outside the court supporting, protesting and demanding the release of those arrested[....] The indignation to see justice done led to the formation of Sikhala Sonke (we cry together) Women's Association. When the police were clamping down on gatherings, throwing tear-gas canisters on women and children, knocking down doors of homes of striking miners every night and shooting with rubber bullets people standing in groups of more than five, Sikhala Sonke Women's Association, organised to protest this.

Sonti was central to the forms of resistance by women in Marikana detailed by Benya, as one of the women who formed Sikhala Sonke. Yet, the representation of Black women in Marikana has framed them only for their widowhood or erased them completely, such as

the Emmy Award winning film *Miners Shot Down* (2014)[6]. However, work by Benya and others details how Black women in Marikana built a movement with an African Feminist consciousness and mobilized to challenge structural oppression and to achieve justice.

As Thozama April reminds us: "nationalist history often positions women in historicist ways so that they never affect the story in any significant way. In nationalist narration, women serve the function of political props without political consequence" (2012: 41). April's reflections also can be applied to the representation of Black women in Marikana, however these women were far from props but were women engaged in movement building and resistance. The same women who formed Sikhala Sonke in Marikana are the people who led to the formation and growth of the EFF in Marikana, as Sonti retells. I asked Sonti her thoughts on the erasure of Black women in the narrative of Marikana, she highlighted that she believes the representation of the Marikana massacre has been driven by people who seek to tell the story for capitalist accumulation instead of reflecting a balanced narrative. She continued to highlight how Black women worked incredibly hard to support Black men mineworkers who were directly impacted by the massacre as well as their families:

> Starting from that day [the massacre] we did not rest. We travelled to hospitals, we accompanied each other. We travelled to police stations, looking for people here and there. You understand? Looking for the men who died, we even spread each other. We travelled to funerals in Eastern Cape, in Lesotho, you understand? We were traveling to assist […] in the court hearings, it was us. We stayed in Garankuwa [the police station] with the 270 men that were arrested. We woke up every day, poured water and juice into bottles. We carried bread on our backs and travelled to deliver the supplies. We did this while we were hungry in our stomachs. Every day! You see? (Sonti 2017)

Sonti details the daily efforts and work that women of Sikhala Sonke did in support of the miners and families who were affected by the massacre, this work has largely been muted in narratives on Marikana. As mentioned previously in this paper, Marikana was a crucial moment to the history of the EFF. In Shivambu and Smith point us to the reasons why the

[6] See Lucas Ledwaba's "The forgotten Marikana widow" (2016) accessed on: http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2016/06/03/the-forgotten-marikana-widow

Marikana Massacre was "a turning point" in the formation of the EFF (2014:44). They detail that days after the massacre, a delegation including him and Malema went to visit the workers and community (Shivambu and Smith 2014:44). They also note their involvement in assisting with convening a legal team to represent some of the arrested miners which included Advocate Dali Mpofu (2014:47). They further argue that they were embraced by the mineworkers, unlike the ANC as miners "saw the ANC as having killed their colleagues" (Shivambu and Smith 2014:46). Additionally, Shivambu and Smith demonstrate that "the relationship with Marikana workers continues and their struggles and battle cries occupy a central space in the EFF" (2014:50). It has continued indeed, and since then the EFF has also occupied a central space within the community of Marikana. As Thabiso Thakali wrote shortly after the 2016 local election results, the "EFF rules the roost in and around Marikana" (2016). In this piece, he reveals the EFF's strength and support in the community. He noted that "the party ruled the roost in Ward 26 in Madibeng - an area that includes Nkaneng and Wonderkop in Marikana - the site of the killing of 34 mineworkers by police in 2012. The EFF scored 58% of the votes cast in Ward 26, the ANC received 34% […]. In the 2014 national and provincial elections in the same area, the EFF scored 43% of votes while the ANC received 33%" (Thakali: 2016).

Before the National Elections in 2014, I was working for a television program called *The Big Debate* as a producer. In the lead up to the elections, I travelled to Marikana to produce a *Special Report on Mineworkers (from Marikana)* for eNCA and eTV (2014). Sonti was part of that episode, along with other EFF members in the community and she was wearing an EFF bag around her waist. As a result, while in conversing with her and other women from Sikhala Sonke and shooting the episode, their passion for the EFF could not be missed. They had been mobilising for the elections and the EFF, months prior to that episode. In our conversation, I asked Sonti to detail her mobilising tactics and challenges that led to the EFF's victory in the 2014 elections in Marikana, she recalled:

> What we did in 2013 was to gather the women. We were working with the women, much much more. I saw the men, coming in bit by bit. In fact, it was the younger men, not the older men. We were working with the women from Sikhala Sonke, much much more, you see. So, we loved to gather. I would call them to meetings, you see. We would delegate. It would be Sikhala Sonke the one day, the other days we would go and find a corner and stand there to recruit [for EFF]. I would get music and I would lease a house that had electricity so that we would

> be able to connect the speakers. I would pay for the electricity of that house, around R40-R50 for just a few minutes so that we could attract people. We would play the EFF album, call people and recruit them […] Things like that, you see. That is what we did before 2014. (2017)

From Sonti's narration, we are able to see the mobilisation strategies development by Sonti and the women of Sikhala Sonke. She found creative strategies such as playing music to attract people from her community, even though she had limited resources. Through this and other examples that she recalled in our conversation, she demonstrated the ways in which she and Black women of Sikhala Sonke built the party's first branch in the area under difficult challenges. In her thesis on the EFF in Marikana, Essop observed "that the most active members, those that ensure that activities of the EFF do occur with frequency, are the women members" (2016: 84).

It's important to note that it was a particularly challenging time for community members in Marikana during the recruitment period of the EFF towards the 2014 elections. In early of 2014, 70 000 mineworkers went on South Africa's "longest wage strike" in the democratic era[7]. Therefore, mineworkers earned no income for months during the strike. For this reason, an EFF membership registration fee of R10 became too costly to part with for mineworkers and their families, although they wanted to become EFF branch members. Recognising these dynamics, Sonti told me the strategy she adopted to still ensure that her community would register as members of the EFF:

> So what I did, I simply did not forget about them. I did not say: 'no because you do not have money you cannot join', I took any filled in membership form. You see? So, I am saying that I even asked for money from my parents, my sisters and my brothers because I did not have work. I asked for money and said to them that I would use the money to buy food; instead I went to pay up [the EFF membership fees]. I did that because I loved the party. We wanted to launch, and in fact we launched the branch. The membership we had gotten was beyond what we imagined. (2017)

[7] See "2014 South African Platinum Strike: Longest Wage Strike in South Africa" by South African History Online accessed on: **http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/2014-south-african-platinum-strike-longest-wage-strike-south-africa** (2014)

In my final question to Sonti in our conversation, I asked if the EFF recognises and acknowledges the fact the prominence of the party in Marikana is a result of the movement building efforts of Black women like her. Sonti expressed:

> The party sees that in Marikana, the EFF is there because of women. I mean, the workers are the ones who contributed to the increased growth of the party. But, the workers were convinced by us, the women. I do not see how the EFF would have succeeded without us. (2017)

Beyond Sonti's the incredible drive, commitment and demonstrated political agency she is a noteworthy political figure in the country because her worldview was unaltered after gaining political power as a Member of Parliament and the EFF CCT. I make this assessment based on my history and relationship with Sonti, as well as watching her public political profile rise over the years. I met Sonti in Marikana in 2014 while working as a television producer. In our conversation for the research inquiry, we reflected on that traumatic time. We reflected on the moment where Sonti had to distribute food that we had catered for the show to members of Sikhala Sonke after we had left, because of the literal hunger community members were experiencing. In our reflections, she expressed that during that time, being a Member of Parliament was not an imaginable political goal. Yet, here she is because of her hard work and consistency. I am in awe of Sonti because she remains the grassroots activist from Marikana. With her attained political status, she continues to treat people with the same kindness and respect. In our conversation, Sonti highlighted that as a senior leader who is tasked with ensuring the party's political work is fulfilled, she is firm in relation to her work. However, in her approach: "*andithethi ngokulwa* [I do not speak with hostility]", with people who take direction from her. She also emphasised that "*ndinothando* [I embody love]" in relation engagement with people and her work. I have experienced sense of kindness and respect consistently from Sonti, ever since our first encounter. By approaching human interaction and leadership in this way, Sonti subverts patriarchal cultures of authority which "eliminate respect for individuals", instead she fosters a culture of dignity and respect (Chigudu 2010: 36).

Lastly, Sonti is a remarkable political leader in South Africa because her physical presence has remained rooted in the struggles facing the poor Black majority in our country. She continues to live in Marikana, when she could have chosen to live elsewhere, in the

suburbs. Sonti has learnt the lessons articulated by the likes of Steve Biko, who noted that "the isolation of the Black intelligentsia from the rest of the Black society is a disadvantage to Black people as a whole" (1978:19). Sonti's continued base in Marikana was motivated by the idea that Black political activists and leaders need to remain grounded (physically and emotionally) in their communities in order to effectively articulate and mobilise for collective emancipation. Sonti also emphasised that she has witnessed how her physical presence in Marikana boosts the morale and faith in her community towards the fulfilment of the political project. When she decided to continue living in Marikana, Sonti tells me that she extended her home. She also built an EFF office within her yard out of her own expense, at a cost of over R50 000 because of her desire to see the party grow. Black women leaders like Sonti are the cause of my continued faith in the EFF and the possibility of a new lived experience of all us.

5.2 Naledi Chirwa: Spokesperson of the Student Command

> We would get to night vigil where, you know, I don't even know what the program is. I just bumped into the poster. And I am like, let me go there. I don't know what's happening but I know it's the men that are up to it. [I] get to the space there, *abo* Lukhanyo*, whoever. You know, being in control, taking ownership and I would stop the whole procession. On some: 'I am taking over now, you will listen to women for the rest of the night' […] I swear […].I remember Simiso*[8] came to me, he's like '*eeh* comrade we don't like how you are hijacking the space, *wara wara wara'*. *Ngathi* [I said], whose space is this? Is this your space? Where are the rights that you own this space? That I must ask permission from you? These students that you see here, when we made the ground fertile, there was no Simiso*, there was no Lukhanyo*. In fact, when Lukhanyo* was the SRC President, he was very liberal. When we brought this whole insourcing question thing into play, he was like no we only deal with student problems, *uyabona* [you see]. So that's where we found these people bra, and now you are gonna tell me I am hijacking the space? (Chirwa 2017)

Naledi Chirwa is a 23-year-old Masters student, a mother, an artist and activist who is the spokesperson for the EFF Student Command and is employed as the Media Liaison for the

[8] *All names have been changed

EFF. I chose to begin Chirwa's profile with the passage above because it captures the young Black woman that I have come to know. A young woman who is conscious and unapologetic (at most times) of her abilities, the fruits of her labour, her fire and voice. The above paragraph and in many of my encounters with Chirwa echoes what bell hooks terms as "talking back" (1989). hooks asserts that the "act of speech, of 'talking back', that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice" (1989: 29). In the event that Chirwa recounted in our conversation for the purposes of this research inquiry, she affirms not only her voice and labour in student activism, beyond that act, she affirms the collective voice of Black women student activists where she asserts: "you will listen to women for the rest of the night" (2017). She challenges the socially constructed and embedded stereotypes of the positions that Black women can and should occupy in patriarchal societies and political spaces. In her acclaimed Ted-Talk titled: "We Should All Be Feminists", Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reminds us that in our patriarchal societies:

> We teach girls to shrink themselves
> To make themselves smaller
> We say to girls
> 'You can have ambition
> But not too much
> You should aim to be successful
> But not too successful
> Otherwise you will threaten the man. (2013)

However, Chirwa refuses to occupy those roles, and she refuses to "shrink" herself. Being in conversation with Chirwa for this research inquiry was the least intimidating task within my research process, because we have become friends. We had been arranging a time for the sit down but our schedules were conflicting, Chirwa was constantly traveling to build branches for the EFF in university and college campuses across the country. We ended up having an unplanned conversation for the research at a friend's balcony over wine after receiving her consent to record. We had the second recorded conversation for the research inquiry during our lunch break at the EFF plenum. There was less control from my side in my conversations with Chirwa because we are close in age; I am a year older than her. Therefore, I was less conscious of respectability politics, we spoke openly in intimacy, where we even expressed ourselves through swearing.

As argued by Hungwe, "the distinction between 'respectable' and 'unrespectable' women in terms of age, class, race, and marital status has the lasting effect of ensuring that women 'carry their burdens with strength'" (2006:45). Thus, respectability politics has worked to define young Black women's actions, dress and speech. Due to the intersecting avenues of our oppression such as race, class, gender and sexuality, Black women "as a rule, developed and adhered to a cult of secrecy, a culture of dissemblance, to protect the sanctity of inner aspects of their lives. The dynamics of dissemblance involved creating the appearance of disclosure, or openness about themselves and their feelings, while actually remaining an enigma" (Hine 1989 915). In my conversation with Chirwa, the culture of dissemblance was limited because we opened ourselves in unordinary ways. We spoke of inner aspects of our lives and work, which were off and on the record. There were moments were we decided to stop recording, in order to proceed with our open conversation.

The first time I met Chirwa was at an audition call-back for a television talk show targeted at young Black women in 2015. We were placed in one group of four, together we organised ourselves and strategized about our roles within the discussion on sex, young women's agency, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drugs etc. Both of us did not know of each other or the fact that we were both members of the EFF. Although we both did not end up being on the show, we both desired the opportunity to co-host the show together because we connected. Several months later we reconnected, I do not remember the exact time and place, but we remember that it was at an EFF event. We were surprised by the realisation that we were both members of the party, well in her case she was one of the leaders of the EFF Student Command. We followed each other on social media and that is when the journey to sustained contact began.

In one of Chirwa's posts on Twitter in July 2016, I saw that a play that she had written and directed, *Shiwelele* was being showcased at the Lier Theatre at the University of Pretoria. I invited a friend and fellow EFF member, Tinyiko Lebogang Shikwambane to attend the play with me. We were blown away! In that theatre, I decided that I would have to be in conversation with Chirwa for this research inquiry. Speaking about the play with Book Lover's Hangout, Chirwa stated that "*Shiwelele* narrates the story of Nkanyezi who was expelled from varsity for leading protests during #FeesMustFall. It tackles the issues of decolonisation and student politics. We only know names of student leaders and not

their lives or challenges. *Shiwelele* lets us in on a quest to go back to varsity with the help of her childhood friends who were not afforded the opportunity of higher education. *Shiwelele* is an amalgamation of protest theatre and South African Realism and will aid my research for my Master's thesis" (2016).

While watching this three-person play with Shikwambane, we kept on pinching each other. Firstly, the excitement came from the fact that this story centres a young Black woman from a township who was raised by a single mother. She is represented as a leader. Her voice is centred within #FeesMustFall, a movement whose public narrative has singled out plenty of men who were leaders within the movement but erased Black women, however not without challenge from Black women. A movement, as Pontsho Pilane wrote had "patriarchy swathed in black consciousness" at Wits University (2015). The second character is a masculine presenting Queer Black woman who "does not necessarily describe herself as such [queer] because she's not exposed to that kind of diction" (Chirwa 2016) and the third character was a physically disabled young Black man. Chirwa took the call from Fallist student movements in the country that "this revolution will be intersectional or it will be bullshit" into the theatre. After the play, I told her about the research inquiry and I asked if she would be able to participate. She agreed with excitement, I asked her to send me her script and I told her we would begin the ethics clearance and interview process after a few months.

One of the moments in the play that captured Shikwambane and I, a moment that we could not get off our minds and the topic of discussion on our train ride back to Johannesburg was when the lead character in the film, was the scene when Nkanyezi chanted these words in a display of militancy:

> This is what it's come to. Number one, nothing will stand in our way, number two, we will destroy whatever attempts to distract us. Death if necessary. Number three, we are not scared of the bullet. Number four, WE ARE THE BULLET. (Chirwa, 2016).

By deciding to make the lead character a Black woman in a play on #FeesMustFall, Chirwa challenged South African political culture and discourse which represents heroism through masculinists lenses. As Gqola notes: "in South African culture, we often use heroism and heroic masculinity as though they mean the same thing, as though this is the only possible demonstration of courage worth celebrating, or as though it is the most

important"(2013: 22). Similarly to Thandiswa Mazwai's song *Nizalwa Ngobani*, where Mazwai honours Black women liberation fighters like Winnie-Madikizela Mandela, Chirwa "puts women in the centre of thinking about heroism" (Gqola 2013:22). Nkanyezi's character in *Shiwelele* also represented a multifaceted image of a Black woman leader; she is militant, vulnerable and witty. Nkanyezi is passionate about her studies and is a proud feminist. As I read the script, I was reminded of these moments where African Feminist consciousness was inserted in the play:

> **JACKSON:** That's not the point, the point is, nobody cares about you anymore! Not even those journalists who used to follow your twitter account like you are Beyoncé. Just us! The ones who stayed behind NK [Nkanyezi]. The ones who stayed behind and lived our dreams through you NK!)
>
> **NKANYEZI:** yes, cos I've lost it all! It's almost exam time and I am still here! Waiting! Jackson is right, those motherfuckers forgot about me. Those fatherfuckers I mean.
>
> **JACKSON:** Dlala feminism! (Chirwa 2016)

In this scene, Chirwa places to the fore the gendered nature of swearwords, while subverting them by infusing the word "fatherfuckers". While doing so, Chirwa is also highlighting how the lead character was left and therefore forgotten by her own father. When Jackson says: "dlala feminism", if we were to directly translate this line from isiZulu, it would mean "play feminism", however within this context, it means "go feminism". This is an important tool used by Chirwa because "feminism" was used as a swear word in many #FeesMustFall movements around the country. This occurred when Black women started claiming their space and challenging patriarchy within the movements. For instance, when a woman chaired a meeting at Wits, Pilane reveals how men refused to listen and cooperate, she notes: "I then asked two of them why they refused to sit and whether this had to do with the gender of the person instructing them. They said it didn't, but they continued to say that 'feminism must voetsek'" (2015). The bellow is another important scene in *Shiwelele:*

> **NKANYEZI:** I got expelled because I was asking for free education
> **JACKSON:** Mara girl you were pushing it. Free education?
> **NKANYEZI**: Yes, free education.

TLAKI: but why didn't they just say no and leave you alone
NKANYEZI: I didn't take no for an answer
JACKSON: hawu, feminism, didn't you say no means no?
NKANYEZI: Yes, no means no. (Chirwa 2016)

In this scene Chirwa uses the play to highlight how Black women within the #FeesMustFall movement have sacrificed their academic futures to achieve free education. Furthermore, uses the scene to spread feminist political education by highlighting the fundamental principle of a women's consent, no meaning no.

Outside of using theatre as a tool for sharing African Feminists ideas and placing Black women at the centre of political narratives, Chirwa plays many roles in building the EFF. We see Chirwa traveling the whole country building branches of the EFF Student Command. We see her as the organiser of rallies and political events. We also witnessed Chirwa directing political strategy and singlehandedly leading songs on top of tables during #FeesMustFall and the #EndOutsourcing campaigns, even while pregnant with her son in 2015. Recently, Chirwa consistently travelled to Durban to organise legal assistance and events of solidarity for Bongikosi Khanyile, a student leader from Durban University of Technology who spent six months in prison for his activism in #FeesMustFall. I attended Khanyile's case as it was heard at the Constitutional Court on the 1st of March 2017, where he was granted bail (Nzondo 2017). Chirwa was central to the organising of the solidarity march by the Student Command for Khanyile on that day, where Malema addressed supporters.

We also see Chirwa as a communicator, through her role as the spokesperson of the EFF Student Command as well as the Media Liaison for the EFF. In her work in the national communications team for the EFF, Chirwa ensured that the lives and legacies of Black women like Miriam Tlali are affirmed. Tlali passed away in February 2017, she was an enemy of the apartheid state, a feminist and "the first black South African woman to publish a novel in English within the country's border" (Boswell 2017). After Tlali's passing, the EFF published a statement titled: "EFF Sends Revolutionary Condolences on the Passing of Miriam Tlali", through Chirwa initiative (EFF 2017).

We have also seen Chirwa as the performer, the woman who teaches us, her friends exercise techniques to "capture our crushes". Like the character Nkanyezi in *Shiwelele*,

Chirwa has been punished for her acts of activism, she continues to be suspended from the University of Pretoria where she was enrolled for her Masters of Arts. Beyond university suspension, Chirwa was arrested for her activism. Upon her arrest, *Times Live* reported that "EFF student leader Naledi Chirwa arrested, quickly bailed" (2016). They noted that: "she was arrested at her home in Pretoria at 5am on Wednesday. Her arrest is believed to relate to the University of Pretoria #UPshutdown campaign. Chirwa appeared before the Pretoria Magistrate's Court where bail was set at R1,000 […].. EFF national spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi tweeted: 'Police took #NalediChirwa from her bed, next to her infant child at 5am in the morning to terrify her so she never dare question the world!'" (Times Live 2016).

In the moments of my encounters and conversations with Chirwa that I previously highlighted, we can see her claiming her space, voice and power where she uses the "constructions of femininity (and the associated role in social reproduction)" to resist and subvert images (Mupotsa 2007: 126). However, power and power relations go through multiple shifts. After a big EFF rally in the lead up to the 2016 elections in which I attended with our friend, Tinyiko Shikwambane, Chirwa came to us after the rally while we were buying food, looking hurt. We asked what the matter was and she began retelling how a man who is one of the provincial leaders in the EFF policed her in public for her choice of dress, she was wearing a short jumpsuit. She was devastated. Months later, she told me that there was a disciplinary process against him. This moment reminded me of the constructed subjectivity of a Black woman and impositions of what is seen as "respectable" choice of dress.

In conversation with young Black women from Gugulethu, Mupotsa highlights that "good girls" in some of her conversations "were described as 'fully dressed fully dressed! You don't have to show your cleavage out! And a bad girl would wear hotpants and sika la cake - they show off, there is no need to show it all or stand out!'" (2007: 121). This provincial leader of the party intended to portray and shame Chirwa for subverting that image, for wearing her short jumpsuit and essentially being "a bad girl". Chirwa and I have conversed about this and other moments where patriarchal and white supremacist power has left us bruised, vulnerable and unable to "talk back" in the immediate moment.

In our conversation, Chirwa spoke about these negotiated and painful contradictions that Black women navigate, she notes:

> When you start asking 'who am I', you have a serious problem, especially because of Black men. A Black woman should never find herself asking 'who am I' because of a Black man, whether its love, whether it's Godliness, whether its spirituality, or like, in academia, everything. If you are in a work space and you are asking yourself 'who I am in this space' because of the presence of a Black man, you have a problem, you need to get rid of him. There's gonna come a time. (2017)

When Chirwa states "there is gonna [going] come a time", her words reminded me of piece titled: "Our Vulnerability is our Power" by Black Feminist activist, Kwezilomso Mbandazayo. In this piece Mbandazayo, like Chirwa alludes to a distant and near future where Black women will have to act. She writes:

> Black women wait. Maybe, a full recognition of our non-existence, maybe once the survival stops, when even the matchbox won't shelter, when the clothes don't fit and the hunger is never mediated. Maybe when we succumb to our nothingness, we will cease to wait. (Mbandazayo 2016)

My bond with Chirwa strengthened on the 6th of August 2016, the evening of the Local Government Election results ceremony hosted by the IEC. On that evening we decided to hold an impromptu silent protest in solidarity with Fezeka Kuzwayo who was given the name Khwezi in support of her identity, Kuzwayo is the woman who told the nation that Jacob Zuma had raped her ten years ago (Horn 2016). Fezeka is a woman we believe, and, other African Feminists who share our position stating: "we stand in solidarity with Khwezi. We applaud her brave stance in reporting her experience to the police and in standing before the courts to name her violation" (Pambazuka News, 2006). I had attended the solidarity protest held for Kuzwayo by the One in Nine a two weeks prior, on the 28th of July; this protest was held at the Johannesburg High Court to remind the nation that it had been ten years since justice was denied to Kuzwayo (One in Nine Campaign 2016). The media's presence was limited, instead they chose to report of the elections.

The decision to engage in a silent protest resulted after seeing on social media that Zuma would be making an address at the results ceremony in Pretoria. This discovery occurred

while Tinyiko Shikwambane and I were driving to the same venue Zuma was expected to speak at. Shikwambane had been covering the election results for a news organisation she was employed by, while I was engaging in participatory observations for this research inquiry. In the car Shikwambane and I thought about staging a protest at the centre, we were afraid and unsure if it was even possible in the little time we had. We decided to call One in Nine coordinator, Mpumi Mathabela for consent and political direction on the ways to effectively engage in protest. After receiving Mathabela's allowance and her reaffirmation that Kuzwayo "is all of us. She is a representative of all of us. She is a failure of the justice system. Any black women can protest" she suggested that we recruit other Black women at the venue to join the protest. Shikwambane and I decided to separate when we reached the venue in order to approach different women to join the protest. We decided that we would ask women at the venue a few initial questions, before inviting them to join the protest. We understood the security risks, therefore we could not easily part with our plan. The questions included:

> "Do you remember the Jacob Zuma rape trial?"
> "Do you remember Khwezi [her given pseudonym to protect her identity]?"
> "Do you believe Khwezi?"

The answer to the last question would determine whether we would share our plan with the women at the venue to ask them to join the protest. After approaching various women at the venue, some expressed doubt of her rape while others reiterated political conspiracies such as Kuzwayo being bought to lie to about Zuma. We reconvened and realised that we would not be successful in that room. We knew that Chirwa was coming to the venue because she was working at the EFF desk, so we decided to call her to ask her to meet us by the IEC media desks when she arrived. The IEC media desk is where we received writing material (without their knowledge of the plan) and it where we wrote our messages for the signs that we would carry. When she arrived with Amanda Mavuso, we asked them similar questions. Again, we asked if they remembered "Khwezi", the first word out of Chirwa's mouth was "khanga" and then she proceeded to tell us about the poem written by Kuzwayo titled: "I am Khanga" that impacted her life (Kuzwayo: 2008). From that moment, we knew that it was safe to tell her of our plan. We invited her to join the protest and they both said yes, although not without fear or hesitation. The protest

happened and Chirwa wrote “khanga” in a piece of paper and carried that sign besides me as demonstrated in **Figure. 3.** Kuzwayo unexpectedly passed away two months later; we laid her to rest in the first African Feminist funeral I attended. May her soul continue to rest in peace and power, she is Feminist warrior that we will never forget.

Figure. 3. #RememberKhwezi Protest at the IEC (Nicolson, 2016)

In our conversation for the purposes of this research inquiry, Chirwa articulated that she is aware of her talents and recognises the social mobility that her postgraduate degree offers her in South Africa. She expressed that when people perceive her role in the EFF as political careerism or a role she was handed, she affirms that she could have chosen a career path that would have offered her monetary accumulation as well as fame because she is a trained actress. Chirwa emphasises that she is involved in activist spaces like the EFF because:

> I chose this shit. CHOSE!! Over and over again. I chose this shit! […] Nobody came and offered it to me, you think I have gotten here because you chose me? I fucken chose you. (2017)

In her contradictory location as a young Black woman in politics, in her strength, in her vulnerability, in her fire, and with her powerful voice, Chirwa reminds me once more of Mbandazayo’s words ,that “as we remain bruised and broken, we are also beautiful and brave” (2016).

5.3 Veronica Mente: Member of Parliament and Member of the CCT

I felt the necessity to be in conversation with Veronica Mente for this research inquiry, when it was just an idea in my mind, even before registering for my Masters of Arts. I was always in awe of the way Mente asserts herself and her political principles. This sense of awe stems from having worked with Mente, observing her politics and presence in parliament, at EFF events and on social media. Seeing Mente at the EFF plenum in 2016 and 2017 rising and chanting "*wathinta abafazi, watinta imbokodo* [you touch a woman, you touch a rock]" before making any contribution to the space, was striking to me. This saying that Mente constantly utters in EFF events such as the plenum, was popularised during the 1956 Women's March which mobilised thousands of women to Pretoria against pass laws enforced by the apartheid government (Hassim 2006: 8). Mente is one of the four Whips of the EFF in their parliamentary caucus. She is also a member of the Central Command Team. Mente and I had a conversation for the purposes of this research inquiry in the evening, after a long day at the 2017 EFF plenum. I arrived at her hotel room, and I unconsciously removed my bra, as if I was at my own home. She laughed and said she did the same when she arrived from plenum. I had written speeches for Mente when I worked in parliament for the EFF in 2014. My ability to remove my bra, without thought or fear indicated my level of comfort in Mente's presence.

I cannot pinpoint where this ease comes from , at times, it astonishes me to a level of self-policing, where I have to remind myself that "you need to have protocol now!" Rereading, the transcript of our conversation, over and over, I think I might have an idea. I believe my ease in Mente's presence speaks to her character, her natural humility which invites comfort to those around her. But this ease must not be misinterpreted for being a "push over", because Mente also oozes energy that asserts: "do not dare try me". She is self-assured and firm. She is a woman who "began her professional career as a bodyguard to the then mayor of Cape Town" as indicated on the parliamentary website, a fact that I was not aware of (2017). I also believe the kind of ease that makes you feel comfortable to remove your bra, in Mente's hotel room is influenced by the work she decided her life to, before joining the EFF.

Mente was working as a volunteer for the Labour Community Advice Media and Education Centre, in Khayelitsha in Cape Town where she also lived. In this role, Mente would advise mistreated workers, inform them of their rights, and offer them representation when unfairly dismissed in a role she labels a "barefoot lawyer" (2017). In a video feature *People First - Workers' rights as the driving force, Veronica Mente, South Africa* by the non-governmental organisation that Mente used to work with-, Workers World. Mente affirms that: "my passion is always to make change [….] I would assist a person in getting a simple thing, a birth certificate. So for me, it's making a change because that child is getting a birth certificate. To an ID, to being a worker, to understand their rights […]"(2013).

In her pursuit to "make change", you feel the authenticity of her project in the way she relates to others with care. Mente stated that she has no interest in political games, which is the reason she decided against being an active member of the ANC after attending its branch meetings. Mente avoided mainstream party politics for these reasons:

> I didn't see myself fitting in. I didn't see myself working for the ANC. Because just the working environment of the ANC like in the ground […] There is no activism, there is no consciousness, there is no Blackness in them. There is just slavery thinking [referring to monetary incentives that drive people within the party]. (2017)

Our entry to our "official" discussion for the purposes of this research inquiry was a question I posed to Mente based on my observation of the events of the day at the EFF plenum. I mentioned that through my observations, I noticed the fact that the first five hands to speak that day during a discussion session were men. Mandisa Mashego was the first woman to contribute to the discussion, which was followed by more contributions from women. I am not the only person who noticed these dynamics that day. While taking hands for contributions the chair of one of the sessions, National Chairperson, Dali Mpofu emphasised that he was "balancing all sides [of the room] and gender which is more important" (2017). Mente responded by highlighting that she had missed some of the earlier sessions, and therefore could comment because she was attending class at the Wits School of Governance. Mente is passionate about education, as well as many Black women leading the EFF . Women leaders of the EFF resolved at one of their meetings that they "must go to school" (Mente 2017). Mente states that efforts for women leaders to

continue their studies are supported in the party. To support this view, she highlighted how she and another Member of Parliament in the EFF, Natasha Louw had to attend class during that plenum and a prior CCT meeting. Mente affirms that the EFF has been flexible to their university schedules; their role is to simply inform the party and submit their apologies in order to be excused. She stated that the party did not question their absence because education is valued in the EFF

To return to our discussion on the limited engagement from women in the party in the open discussion during plenum that day, Mente articulated a tough love response. She said: "we need to push women. In a manner that I will lobby tomorrow, and say women must speak. You know they have a lot to say, they just don't have courage [….]. So they need that push" (2017). The reason Mente chooses this method is motived by her past professional experiences. She recounted her experience with her mentor Khunjulwa Phaliso who she worked with in the trade unions:

> She is a lady that groomed me, even dragged me kicking and screaming into being a shop-steward. *Wathi* [she said]: 'but *wena* [you] are good at telling us where to get off, you must go and tell the presiding offer's there where to get off'. She gave me a case without me even knowing the merits of it. *Wathi* [she said] 'go and argue the case, the person must not be fired'. And I was like: '*haibo,* give me pointers *mfazi* [woman]'. She says: 'but what you were saying there in the office, telling me where to get off, go say it there. You were good to tell me that how could you let a person be fired when you should have known that this was not done for the person […]. This person must be given a second chance. These things you are saying, you must go and say them'. (2017)

Mente also has an extreme expectation of herself to be the best. In a presentation on the EFF's outcomes in the Local Government Elections at the plenum, Mente's was named as one of the leaders with the best election outcomes. As stated previously, Mente was not active in party politics prior to joining the EFF, I congratulated her and inquired about the process she went through to achieve those outcomes. Mente stated that:

> There are no systems, listen to the people that have done the job. Do your own research in terms [of] how do you best do it. And you must have that thing in you [that] I have an opponent. It takes me down, I take it down, let's go! But you can't do it if you are going to sit at home. I had Sima to leave my children at six weeks, the twins because the elections machinery was already moving and I wasn't. My

> children were only six weeks, the first War Council I attended we were already dealing with the progress [….] I remember the National Chairperson asking me: 'ooh Vero you are back, how old are the kids?' I said '6 weeks'. He said '*yhoo* are you allowed to fly when you just gave birth?'. Six weeks with caesar. I said my doctor said its fine. And the President asked: 'have you finished your maternity leave?' And I said: 'almost, but I am behind with my work'. Mind you, where I got deployed, I wasn't deployed, now I get deployment. I get deployed to the most difficult place, Joe Morolong Municipality in the Northern Cape. Its 15 Wards, but I can tell you that it's at the geographical spread of like 300 Wards, if you were to be in Johannesburg. But even 300 Wards in Johannesburg are clustered like that. The geographical spread, if you are driving from Ward 1 to the last. I did that with registration, just to test if I can drive through from Ward 1 to the last one. Driving from Ward 1 to the last one took me literally 9 hours plus. (2017)

After being deployed at that municipality and placing systems in place, she was deployed to take over another area, this area was assigned to another leader , however they had to be excused the due to their lack of performance. Mente articulated that "we [EFF leaders] saw that we were not going to get anything here if this person is here, I had to adopt a second one" (2017). Her results were astounding considering this was the first time Mente and the EFF participated in the Local Government Elections.

Mente recounted the number of PR councillors the EFF received in the areas was deployed in during the elections:

> In Joe Morolong I got six PR's out of fourteen. So the ANC, the UDM, the COPE and everyone else shared the remaining amount […]And in Ga-Segonyana [It's] fourteen Wards, and PR Councillors are supposed to be thirteen. We got five, [and] then everyone else is sharing the remaining number. We ended up with two seats in the region's district. [In] the district, I think we have how many seats? Nine . We got two as the EFF […] Joe Morolong's percentage was 19.8 % and Ga-Segonyana's percentage is 18.7. (2017)

Within the EFF War Council[9], the leaders who achieved these numbers were Mente and Mbuyiseni Ndlozi who she said "worked in Tshwane, Tshwane is townships. It's very easy to work in a townships" while she had to work in "deep rural, deep rural areas. In our

[9] The EFF War Council is the organ that runs the day to day activities of the EFF. The War Council is made of Top 6 Officials and 9 other members of the Central Command Team

house holds [when campaigning] you must even say, that Julius Malema party mama" while describing the EFF (2017).

I asked Mente about her mobilising strategy that resulted in this great victory for her and the EFF, especially as a first-time Local Government election campaigner. Mente noted that:

> Tell you one thing now, if you want to achieve anything in the EFF, do not think you are a Commissar. Take that Commissar cap and put it here. Go with the Fighters […]. So what I do, I ask the PCT[10] to take me to the region and leave. Leave me and let me learn the territory on my own. And once you do that, once you learn the territory on your own you won't have favourites. You won't have people you dislike. The people you dislike, you will dislike [them] […] because they are lazy. '[If] you are lazy, get out of my team and I won't like you […]. I am not here to be your friend, I don't like you, you are lazy and *wena usibuyisela ngemva, beka ngapha*[you are taking us back, move over]. I like these ones, let's go!'. You need to do that and of course resource them, with the little you have, help them. Go with them, they appreciate the fact that the Commissar is running with us. But once you are a couch Commissar […] (2017)

In our conversation for the research inquiry, I asked Mente about her decision to join the EFF, because she previously emphasised her decision to be inactive in party politics. Mente affirmed that she saw the EFF's vision as "a game changer" which spoke her language and appealed to her values. While watching the EFF's first press conference on television in 2012, Mente said she saw a familiar face. This was Gcobani Nzongane who was her junior in the trade unions. Nzongane was the EFF representative in the Western Cape. She recounts:

> I called him immediately after, I think he hadn't even landed in Cape Town. I called him immediately to ask him: 'okay, tell me now. I see you on TV, I see you with Julius Malema, Floyd Shivambu, I don't know the rest of the people […] What was happening?'(2017)

[10] An EFF "PCT" is a Provincial Command Team

Nzongane then explained to Mente which drove her to the EFF website to delve further in the party's vision. What appealed to her mostly was the emphasis on the connected struggles of the Black poor majority, particularly workers struggles, as stated earlier that was Mente's area of work. Mente continued communicating and Nzongane, he then told her about a meeting where the provincial structure would be appointed. Mente subscribes to a philosophy which advocates for women carry each other forward, similarly to Charlotte Maxeke which April highlights as "popularised through what became the slogan of the women's movement in the 1930s 'if you rise, bring someone with you'" (2012: 182). Recalling the moment she found out about the EFF meeting in the Western Cape:

> The moment I knew that there is a meeting. I called an all women team, we were five in the car. Women only, that's just how I roll. Women only, five in the car. We are going to this meeting, we will listen. I don't want men, because they are going to want to take over. That's what I hated, I saw men in the ANC, two men are fighting over useless things [positions], [yet] people have no houses. I am like *haaaa fok*, these men, once they join political parties they don't even care. Let me take people that I know that they care. (Mente 2017)

This ethic of bringing other women along with her, lifting them up, affirming their work has been followed by Mente as her political power rose within the EFF. For instance, in December 2016 I was struck by the beautiful way in which Mente affirmed the Black women she mobilised with in the Eastern Cape. She wrote on Facebook:

> Before the year ends I wish to motivate encourage and thank the following hardworking loyal *Mbokodos* of the EFF Eastern Cape. During my deployment in the province as a convenor of deployees you showed respect for the organisation and the people of EC. Through the hardship you remained humbled , calm and have given the 2016 LGE [Local Government Elections] your all. Wish you the best 2017 in your leadership journeys. Asanda Matshobeni , Kanyisa Kay Dunjwa, Sis Pretty, Phindiwe Kaba , Phumeza MissBreezy Kwababa , Yoliswa Yolz Yako, Ngendane Nolonwabo, Zoleka Qotoyi , Mama Madlamini of Mnquma, Phushie in BCM with Apleni's women volunteers. *Wathint'abafazi wathint'imbokodo* [you touch a woman, you touch a rock]. (2016)

I watched the conversation with the Black women who she affirmed in her Facebook status unfold, they expressed gratitude and told her that "you were and will remain our rock you truly inspired us" and "you inspired us in that we saw true leadership on you", and this was beautiful to watch (2016). Men within the EFF also commented on the status suggesting they felt side-lined; she responded by stating that they should wait and added a smiling face. Her unapologetic nature to women's spaces in politics and affirming them is one of the things that make Mente an inspiring leader in the EFF.

5.4 Mandisa Mashego: EFF Acting Chair of the Gauteng Region and Member of Legislature in Gauteng

One of the most important principles of African Feminist theories is the value of Black women freely speaking and claiming their voices. It was on the 9th of February 2016, during a march by the EFF through the streets of Johannesburg that I witnessed Mandisa Mashego claiming her space and voice unapologetically, in what was largely a cisgender heterosexual man dominated space.

Mashego is the acting Chairperson of the EFF in Gauteng as well as a member of the Gauteng Provincial Legislature. As we were preparing to begin our long march through the streets of Johannesburg, before the march, Mashego challenged one of the men in the EFF who was also one of the marshals of the march. As we were about to begin the march, it seemed as if the marshal was not responding to her requests. She asked him: "are you not listening to me because I am a woman?" (2016). A few weeks prior to that, in my first encounter with Mashego, she asked a question to members attending EFF 2016 plenum. She asked: "what are the gender demographics?", referring to the meeting. It was evident from the event that there was a smaller representation of women compared to that of men. However, her question was not addressed by the EFF's top six leadership representatives.

As Patricia Hill Collins affirms "oppression and resistance remain intricately linked such that the shape of one influences that of the other. At the same time, this relationship is far more complex than a simple model of permanent oppressors and perpetual victims" (2000: 274). Mashego's actions show us that there are women in the EFF who are not perpetual victims to sexism, they address and challenge sexism. Furthermore, her acts of

defiance in the face of sexism remind us of the collective history of Black women in political spaces to “counteract the racism and sexism of their cultural milieu and so to develop new subjectivities” (Mama 1995). It was important for me to retell this story because Mashego challenges the stereotypical notions that Black women are passive victims and inarticulate political subjects.

Of the group of Black women leaders that I interviewed, Mashego is the one that I knew the least. I have seen her at EFF events, followed her work on the media as well as in her social media accounts. I had never had an in-depth conversation with Mashego although I had always desired the opportunity. Mashego was the first Black women leader of the EFF that I engaged in a recorded conversation with for the purpose of this study. We met at a restaurant in Braamfontein, upon her request. I was extremely nervous, because I was not too familiar with her and I knew that she had a commanding presence. Furthermore, I did not want to bore her or make her feel that spearing a moment to talk with me was a waste of her time. We started talking informally. Mashego asked me to recommend a good dish for her to eat before we began the recorded conversation. The conversation also turned to our health and her decision to make healthier food choices.

In conversation, she recommended that I find a plant called Moringa. She told me that Black women have used it for centuries as a vitamin supplement. My nerves started to slowly disappear after this moment, because I experienced our intimacy growing and we began our recorded conversation. Although, I was conscious of the time during our informal conversation, seeing that she only had a few moments to spare with me. However, that process also challenged me in ways that directly spoke to the African Feminist Standpoint methodology. I had not broken away from my previous research training methods because I expected our conversation to be “formal”. After I became self-aware, I began to ease into the conversation. I dispelled the notion that I was there to "research” Mashego or “extract” information from her. It was an important lesson to learn in my first conversation for the purposes of this research inquiry, Mashego assisted me in learning to place my African Feminist Standpoint research methodology into practice. If we had not spent time engaging in such a long “informal” conversation, I do not believe I would have gained deeper insight on her life, world views, and political

history. It also set the tone for the conversation which become light hearted and filled with laughter.

Mashego initially indicated that she did not have much time to spare for our conversation. She insisted that she could only be with me for less than 45 minutes as she had other commitments. To my surprise, our conversation could not stop flowing, and as a result we ended up spending more than two hours together. I ended up being the one who was conscious of time because I had another appointment to fulfil in Melville, and Mashego kindly offered to drive me to the meeting that I had from Braamfontein. In the car, we continued talking and I asked her to continue recording for the research inquiry because she directly spoke to my research questions.

When we "officially" began our recorded conversation, delving into the research inquiry, I read out parts of the introduction to her profile because I had used it in my research proposal. I expressed how amazed I was by her in the experiences with the marshal at the march as well as the moment she highlighted the gender imbalances of the 2016 EFF plenum. Furthermore, I asked Mashego if she remembers the altercation she had with the marshal at that EFF march I referenced earlier, she responded:

> I probably said that to that Fighter, I say it all the time. Because there are people who say if you point out that you are a woman, when you are trying to assert yourself, you are manipulating the space. Like you are seeking sympathy and stuff, just for pointing [that] out […] . It's like that thing when you ask white people: 'are you abusing me because I am Black?'. It's a very necessary question, because what it does, you don't know whether the person is doing it because you are female or not, or *uyazidelelela nje* [they are undermining]. [Or] He's just an unruly [person] […] it's important to first clear that part, so that the person can say no or yes*, akere*. Then you know what you are dealing with, *akere*. Then you know, okay if he says yes, then I am dealing with a "*angeke ngitshelwe ngum'Fazi* [I won't be told by a woman]". Then you know how to deal with that, before you can apply a generic authority because remember when you are in a position of authority, your breasts and your vagina have nothing to do with it. The competence that is expected from you is determined by the role that you are occupying. It's not determined by your gender […]. When people look at you and say: 'ooh Simamkele, you are the Chairperson of EFF in Gauteng, but there's a crisis here in this province of yours. What's going on there in Tshwane?'. They

> don't say from a woman's point […] you are the chair, there's no other one. There's a duty, you must answer and say 'okay, this is what is happening'. (Mashego 2017)

I appreciated the thought behind Mashego's tactic, by immediately highlighting patriarchal or racist actions directed at her. However, I did not agree with her that women who are in positions of authority are not impacted by their gender. My response to her statement was:

> Do you find that it is supposed to be like that? But maybe [not], let's say there was another chair who was a man. So in terms of tone, when they ask you 'what's going on here?'. Does the tone change or do you think the tone remains the same? (Mashego 2017)

Mashego's response to my question was: "Maybe for other women, but for me I have never had the privilege of people accommodating my gender" (2017). I believe Mashego's response this speaks to her political theoretical grounding as a long-time member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) as well as her background in corporate South Africa. Furthermore, during our conversation she mentioned who her political mentors were and they were all men. She consulted some of these political heavyweights who I will not name the moment she made the decision to join the EFF when it was founded. I highlighted this to her and asked if she had women political mentors and Mashego responded by stating that: "I don't know where to find, you know, those kinds of mentors. Maybe in corporate, a lot of us corporate Black women spent our time [there] in the 90's" (2017). We began talking about the few women mentors available in mainstream politics; she mentioned that she had worked with Cheryl Carolus when she was a CEO at SA Tourism:

> I never thought I'd actually know her personally until I went to work at South African Tourism. And I just loved her. And I didn't work with her politically but I worked with her at a normal career space […] You can tell that sense of courage, whether in the boardroom or wherever she got it akere she was in UDF [United Democratic Front]. (2017)

When Mashego highlighted that she did not know where to find women political mentors, she spoke to the ways in which young Black women in politics have little access to experienced Black women leaders in politics in the country. Although Black women political leaders are present in the country, particularly within the ANC. We can refer to

women such as Thenjiwe Mtintso, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Pregs Govender and other Black women who were involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. I believe that it would be very beneficial to Black women leaders in the EFF to connect with leaders such as Mtintso, Madikizela-Mandela and Govender to learn and share experiences, although these women are no longer active in active party politics in the country. In reference to Black young women writers Gail Smith makes the argument that younger women were hungry "for mentors, not role models. Above all, they are looking for people to engage with their ideas, to support them, to challenge them, and to encourage them to come to voice" (2000: 39). I share the same argument as Smith particularly in relation to Black women leaders of the EFF like Mashego who spoke to this vacuum.

Mashego grew up between Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape, to an activist family. In our conversation, she expressed that she: "didn't know most of my life that I was a gender activist, I honestly didn't know. I didn't understand, I grew up in a family where almost everyone was an activist" (2017). She continued to share that her "mother was fathered by some white man" and therefore was racially classified as "Coloured" under apartheid, although her considered herself as a Xhosa woman. Due to her mother's racial classification, Mashego was able to attend better resourced schools than the Black majority. She attended mostly Catholic schools while growing up. After graduating from high school, Mashego was not able to complete her studies at university due to a lack of funding. She worked her way up the South African corporate ladder and later returned to school. Mashego has a background in Communications and Public Relations, and worked for some of South Africa's biggest organisations such as: *City Press*, Telkom Business, SA Tourism, NUMSA Investment Companies, South African Airways and *Beeld*, to name a few. Prior to joining the EFF, Mashego was an entrepreneur focusing on Communications and Public Relations. She was politically active in the ANC and the SACP, but more so with the SACP because of its left leaning ideology. She was the Communications Manager for the ANC in the Limpopo province. In our conversation she recalled that she

> I quit from the ANC in December in 2012, I still have my resignation letter on email because I emailed it from the chairperson and the Top 5. I was a BEC [Branch Executive Committee] member in my branch […]I resigned, they rejected my resignation, they refused it. (2017)

However, Mashego stuck by her decision to leave the ANC and returned to her corporate career. During our conversation, I asked Mashego to reflect on her decision to join the EFF. Mashego emphasised that she not invited into the EFF, although she was acquainted with Malema and Shivambu. She demonstrated how she exercised her own political and personal agency in her decision to join the party. Mashego made the decision to join the EFF in the initial stages of the party's founding in 2013. Mashego acknowledges that she was a bit hesitant to join the EFF because she was working for a state parastatal, Telkom Business. She tells me that she thought that "*bazo deala nam* [they will deal with me]" (2017). It was a risk that she took, nonetheless. Mashego's risk to join the EFF, even at the risk of job insecurity was also motivated by guilt. She recounted how guilty she felt for being part of the ANC in the last two decades of the democratic dispensation. She expressed that she also felt guilty rom benefiting from Affirmative Action (AA) policies while the Black majority remained economically marginalised. Mashego explained:

> I felt guilty that we didn't continue fighting. We joined the ANC to participate in the electoral politics of a fake democracy [..]. We were already benefiting from Affirmative Action, right. I got an AA job, and I was already earning more money than my mom. Even my every first job at the bank, I was earning more money than my mom who had already worked 20 years at OK Bazaars. (2017).

By acknowledging her guilt and complicity within the ANC's rule in the democratic dispensation, Mashego releases herself from the critique of "selective remembering or active forgetting" directed at the EFF by Nieftagodien (2015: 451). In his examination, Noor Nieftagodien notes that EFF leaders and members who were part of the ANCYL have obscured "the ANCYL's complicity in what the new party now accepts as the elite pacts of the early 1990s" (2015: 451). I found it important that Mashego was self-reflective in this sense.

In 2014 during the first EFF elective conference, Mashego was elected into its Gauteng provincial leadership as Deputy Chairperson. While the party elected Zorro Boshielo as the Gauteng Chairperson. After months in his position, Boshielo resigned from his position and Mashego was appointed as the Acting Chairperson. It was reported in South African media that Boshielo resigned because he was " frustrated by a lack of debate in the organisation. Boshielo also said the party has moved away from a community driven

programme towards a parliamentary driven programme" (Grootes 2015). South African media also announced that Boshielo's departure was caused by infighting within the organisation where Boshielo questioned the uses of the party's funds and "labelled the EFF MPLs in Gauteng [as] 'mere puppets and friends of (EFF deputy president) Floyd Shivambu'" (Ndaba 2015).

Therefore, in taking up the role as Acting Chairperson of the Gauteng province, Mashego needed to work to stabilise the party. The province was not only destabilised by Boshielo's resignation. Another controversy that affected the EFF in Gauteng, were disgruntled members of the party who were led by Lufuno Gogoro (News24, 2014). Gogoro was quoted in the media as stating that: "Julius [Malema] is a liar […] He is lying that we can sit down with him. Julius doesn't want to listen to anyone except [EFF chief whip] Floyd [Shivambu] and we cannot run an organisation through friendship" (News24 2014).

Gogoro mobilised other members within the province and they branded themselves as the "defenders of the EFF constitution" (News24 2014). These party members then "planned to approach the South Gauteng High Court in Johannesburg […] for an urgent interdict against Malema and the EFF's leadership" (News24 2014). Beyond failing to execute the interdict against the EFF leadership, the "defenders of the EFF constitution" were also involved in trying to break party growth and unity by disturbing the launching of EFF branches in areas in Gauteng (Mashego 2017). Both of these internal battles negatively affected the party's public image, it also resulted in the destabilisation of EFF branches in Gauteng. Therefore, when Mashego was the Deputy Chairperson and later the Acting Chairperson of the Gauteng region, part of her role was to stabilise the province and to rebuild its branches. Mashego rose to the occasion and was effective in restabilising the province. It was hard for Mashego to initially admit the fruits of her labour to me in our conversation. I emphasised to Mashego that her role in the stabilisation of Gauteng is evident, because the province is in much better shape after her appointment.

Although Mashego mentioned she could not delve into the details of her employed strategies in ensuring stability in the province. She mentioned one instance when a

former employee of the EFF in the Gauteng Legislature, Wiekus Kotze accused EFF leaders of stealing public funds and trying to assassinate him (Tau 2015). Kotze made these remarks after the party had suspended him; the party argued that Kotze defrauded the organisation. The spokesperson of the party stated:

> Mr Kotze was formally charged by the EFF caucus in Gauteng for illegally and without authorisation transferring money of the organisation to his personal account in the pretext that he was paying for T-shirts[…] When Mr Kotze was confronted about this transaction, he admitted to this impropriety and fraud and offered to resign as an employee of the organisation[….]The EFF duly released him as an employee upon realising that in two of his previous jobs, Mr Kotze was suspended for financial impropriety. (Modjadji 2015)

In our conversation, Mashego expressed that her strong corporate background resulted to her being "a governance freak" (2017). Therefore when the incident occurred with Kotze, Mashego highlighted that she placed pressure on the organisation to act, that she "pushed" and "sent an email to the President *kari* [I said] I can't […] no one can steal money from the EFF. No one, no one must be allowed, no one" (2017). Although the battles between the EFF and individuals such as Kotze and Gogoro took place publicly through the eyes of the media, little is known that it was Black women leaders of the party like Mashego who were doing damage control behind the scenes. After sharing her role in challenging Kotze's actions, I expressed to Mashego that I was not aware of her role in this case. I also emphasised that it is important to highlight such acts by Black women leaders of the EFF, in order to avoid the erasure of these efforts in their political legacies. Mashego agreed with the need to guard against Black women's erasure. She then began to delve deeper into her actions in soothing internal divisions and ushering stability in the province.

Mashego explained that:

> The stabilisation of the EFF right in Gauteng specifically after we had all that drama with the Zorro's [Boshielo] - the former Chairperson and *bo* Lufuno [Gogoro] and the whole agency nonsense. I mean, we had to deal with it behind the scenes, by the way. We had to apply underground tactics […] It was women who were there […] It was females there in the

> forefront, it was *bo* Thato, *bo* Kgomotso*[11] . I can't remember the other Fighters, it was the female fighters who went there to deal with Lufono. In the front-line, there were lots of male Fighters but the ones who confronted Lufuno were the females. *Bamkhomba kanje* [they pointed at him], *bamkhomba bathi wena* [pointed at him and said you] we want you out of EFF. (2017)

What is important about Mashego's narration is not only her act in affirming the role that she played in stabilising the party in the province. Mashego also highlights the role that other Black women played. She works to unmask the fact that Black women like Thato, Kgomotso and others placed themselves in danger, in 'the front-line' while confronting Gogoro. Furthermore, there are moments in Mashego's journey to stabilise the EFF in Gauteng where she was in physical danger. In our conversation, Mashego highlighted her experiences while traveling around the province to rebuild and launch new EFF branches. She explains that her role as Acting Chair of the province included observing multiple branch meetings to examine their functionality. Her role also included travelling to multiple branches in the province to officiate the launching of newly established branches. Mashego told me of instances where she discovered people pretending to be members of the party, whose intentions were simply to disrupt the launching of EFF branches. People would even threaten her with violence, while gathered in their large numbers. During this time, Mashego had to acquire the services of private security for protection.

In our conversation, she mentioned a particular experience while traveling in Johannesburg to launch an EFF branch. When she arrived at the venue of the meeting, she found a mob of people around a venue. This mob shouted: "*sifuna la* [we want that] Mandisa" (2017). Instead of turning back, Mashego went inside the venue and told EFF members to lock the doors so they in order to continue the day's program. While engaging with EFF members in the meeting, the mob continued was shouting and making threats outside the venue. While officiating the meeting, Mashego emphasised the importance of being present to EFF members of in the room, she insisted that their program continue. Mashego expressed that although it was hard to avoid the noise coming from outside, she could not allow the disruptions to impact their branch launch. She ended the story with

[11] Names changed

a proud smile and told me that, on that day they successfully launched that particular branch.

In my earlier critique of the EFF, I highlighted the lack of gender mainstreaming in the ideological grounding of the party. I argued that this gap has influenced the party's gender policies, advocacy and election manifestos. However, while engaging in further research for Mashego's profile, I came across a television debate that Mashego took part in with DA leader Makashule Gana during the 2016 elections. In this debate, Mashego was able to mainstream gender in her analysis of challenges facing local government in the country, which was a shift from the EFF's manifesto. For instance, when discussing the housing backlog in urban areas, Mashego mentioned that in abandoned houses/areas by the state that women "are getting raped in those houses" (eNCA 2016). Furthermore, Mashego highlighted the proposed 24 hour clinics within the EFF manifesto, in doing so; she emphasised the importance of including maternity wards in every clinic (eNCA 2016). Additionally, in response to a question on the EFF's views on the development of small businesses, Mashego indicated that: "we [EFF] stated very clearly that we do not want the tender system and of course we do not want the labour brokering system, […] because it produces the same under-skilling and underdevelopment primarily of Black people, and especially Black females" (eNCA 2016).

From my conversation with Mashego, I valued her analysis in relation to the notion of Black women pulling each other down. It has been labelled as the "PhD [Pull Her Down]" syndrome, which is part of the discourse on "The New South African Woman" (Gqola 2013:58). Mashego challenged this discourse, and argued that she believe that "we are not naturally resentful of each other. Especially Black women" (2017). I agreed with her in our conversation, and mentioned that I have watched Black women uplift each other, all my life. Mashego argued that due to the fact that Black women are the most economically marginalised group, at most times, their acts of contestation are caused by a lack of access to resources. She supported her argument by evoking her lived experience and her relationship with her sisters:

> We lived in a four-roomed house, and my mother and father had their own bedroom and the four [her sisters] of us had ours. We used to fight over space on the bed because we had one bed….We were not fighting as

> sisters, did we hate each other? Could we claim that we hated each other? We were fighting over the bed. (2007)

In 2015, while performing her duties at the Gauteng Legislature, Mashego opened a case of sexual harassment against Mbongeni Radebe who is part of the ANC caucus (Dayimani 2015). Her case was profiled by the media, in a report by *Destiny Connect,* Mashego is quoted as stating:

> It starts with very uncomplimentary comments, but with this incident, it got to a point where he made physical contact […]the most tragic part of it was that we were not having a political difference, it was just in conversation. But when the person feels outsmarted or that they cannot respond to what you are saying intellectually, they threaten you with either sexual assault or violence. (2016)

By publicly naming the leader of the ANC who sexually harassed her, by opening a case against him Mashego worked to ensure the sexual harassment of Black women in politics is no longer negotiable. She contributed to ensure there is "a social cost" to patriarchal violence where "we render violators unsafe" (Gqola 2015:18).

In conclusion, Mashego's fighting spirit reminds of Winnie-Madikizela Mandela who has also been affected by the stereotypical tropes of being the "angry black woman" (Qambela 2014). Madikizela-Mandela and Mashego's history demonstrates how they work to challenge women's imposed subjectivity, one that dictates that women have to be "timid" and non-militant. Mashego's fighting spirit has worked to challenge racist capitalism, as she did with her former employer KPMG. In 2016 she tweeted[12]: "Years back when Partners @ KPMG told us not 2 speak African lang[uange]; I took the racist Partners head on myself, without any mass support-I won" (Mashego 2016). In this profile, I also highlighted how Mashego challenged Mashego's patriarchal power in the EFF and in the ANC. Mashego also publicly declared that: "we are not afraid to face our enemies. We are prepared to fight to the bitter end" (Kumalo 2016). She was affirming her support of student calling for free education that were brutalised by private security and the police

12 See news article by the *Citizen* "EFF's Mandisa says she fought 'racist' KPMG" (2016) accessed on: http://citizen.co.za/news/news-national/1269116/effs-mandisa-says-she-fought-racist-kpmg-over-language-policy/

(Kumalo 2016). The character of the EFF will truly be tested if the party is able to retain Black women leaders like Mashego. Women leaders like Mashego who are self-assured, and stand their ground even when it brings discomfort to patriarchal power in party ranks.

5.5 Hlengiwe Hlope: Deputy Secretary General and Member of Parliament

I met Hlengiwe Hlope the DSG of the EFF in 2014 when I worked as a researcher for the EFF in parliament for a few months. We worked closely as I wrote speeches for her in parliament. Upon taking the job, I had to relocate from my home in Johannesburg to Cape Town in short period of time for the role. After living in a hotel for a week, Hlophe offered to accommodate me because she was living alone in her house at the parliamentary village. I lived with her and time spent with her was lovely. We spoke about politics, current affairs, and even our love lives. She expressed sadness and disappointment when I left the position.

During our conversation for the purposes of this research inquiry, I was surprised by some of the political revelations of her life that Hlophe shared with me. For instance, I was unaware that she was a Ward Councillor at 22 years old for the ANC. Hlophe became a Councillor at an early age because she was active in party politics from a very young age, particularly with the SACP. She says she joined politics because she resonates with the struggles of the poor, "for one reason *ke,* [...] I am from a poor background, as well" (Hlophe 2017). Hlophe's political background mirrors a central feature in Black women's political experiences in South Africa. She too was removed from party political participation because she engaged in what bell hooks terms as *talking back* (1989:3). *Talking back,* is "speaking as an equal to an authority figure and daring to disagree and/or have an opinion" (hooks 1989:3).Beyond this act, *talking back* particularly for Black women has transformation value, it inspires a new possibility (hooks 1989:23). It ignites a "liberated voice" where we can move "from object to subject" (hooks 1989:23).

In our conversation, Hlophe expressed that within the ANC and SACP: "factions where very high so they kicked me out. And even in the SACP, Blade Nzimande kicked me out" (2017). Hlophe shared the punishment she experienced for *talking back* which led to the

decision by the Secretaty General of the SACP, Blade Nzimande to removing her from the party. She explained:

> Because I was the loudest month, challenging things [...] Each and every meeting, so they kicked me out. And I joined COPE [Congress of the People], and the project of COPE went very wrong. (2017)

Before joining the EFF, Hlophe was working for COPE as an administrator in their constituency office. What fascinated me most about Hlophe, was the way in which she became one of the most powerful leaders in the EFF, out of her own daring nature. Hlophe was not invited into the EFF. Today, Hlophe commands space within the EFF and in South Africa's political sphere due her own personal and political will. In our conversation for this research inquiry, Hlophe shared how she came to meet with Julius Malema. She expressed that admired Malema's views on achieving Black justice in South Africa from a distance for a long time, even while in the ANC and after moving to COPE. After Malema was expelled from the ANC in 2012, Hlophe recounts that:

> Everyone was very sad *nje ukuthi* [that] I wonder what was happening in his [Malema's] life, what will be his future now? He came back, he addressed the media. I remember very well, I was driving with my friends and I said to my friends: 'if this comrade starts this political party, I won't hesitate to join his political party' [...]It's friends who are not politically active. They said: 'no no no, we are going to join [...] We are going to follow you.' (2017)

Hlophe made the decision to join Malema's political party, even before its formation. So when the EFF was finally initiated, she actively ensured that she joined the party. I choose to quote how Hlophe recounted the beginning of her journey in the EFF in its entirety:

> It's funny because we were having a party with friends. We organise a party every month. As the boring type, one of my friends who is gay, he told me that: 'listen, there is a boyfriend of mine who is coming. *Naye,* he likes this thing of yours of politics, *mngane* [friend]. So please entertain him, because *wena* [you] when we are dancing you are just sitting down. You don't even drink that much'. Then this man came, ooh Seth Mazibuko [...]'Ooh how are you, *wara wara wara [etc]'*. While they were enjoying themselves, we were talking politics. And Seth told me that: 'I am advising Julius, *wara wara wara'*. Things we bad *nje,* about the president

> *neh.* And I said: 'no, I love that man please tell him that I am behind him'. And he said: 'take this number, he will appreciate very much if you can send him a message'. I said: 'really?' I took the number. Then after he indicated that he might establish [the party], I sent him a message. *Ngithi* [saying]: 'listen, I am here in KZN and we are many, we are going to mobilise'. And he replied, *yhoooo ngajampa*[I jumped]! *Yhoo,* a message from him? *he he he!* And then, he went to an SAFM interview. I was perusing Facebook, I called in […] I called in right there, I said: 'my name is Hlengiwe Hlophe. I am calling from KZN'. When I was perusing Facebook, […] there was a quotation that was put there on Facebook by Sipho Mbatha. And then I used that quotation to say: 'the struggle, *wara wara wara*. So you must not get tired, so *nje*, I am behind you '. And then after that he sent me an sms to say: 'It's you who have sent me a message three months ago?'. I said:' yes it's me'. He said: 'ooh okay, lets push my sister'. Then he sent me an sms when he started this thing [the EFF]: 'they will be a PCT formation in KZN. Did Nathi, our coordinator consult you?'. I said: 'no, he didn't'. He called Nathi. And I was crossing the biggest road in Durban, West Street. I nearly fell, Julius Malema calling me? I didn't hear what he was saying because I was nervous […] Then after that, I called Nathi, I said: 'I just received a call from the President, what is it'. He said: 'there's a PCT tonight but it's still secret, but you must come *wara wara'*. Then I told my colleagues because in COPE we were also divided. I told my colleagues who were always taking about him and said: let's go'. There other colleagues said: 'no, don't go'. I said: 'no, whether you like it, I am going to that meeting'. It was at night, he came with Kenny [Kunene] so we engaged until 2am. (2017)

What is important about the narrative that Hlophe recounts here is her sense of agency and political will. She sent Malema a text message, a message that was straight forward and indicated her strength as a political mobiliser. She did not say: "pick me to join your party". Instead, she told Malema what she could offer in terms of mass support in her province and affirmed that "we are ready to mobilise" (Hlophe 2017). Furthermore, by calling into the radio station after months had passed from her initial contact with Malema. Hlophe demonstrated her sense of persistence and determination to be part of this political project. In a moment when Malema was at his most vulnerable politically, after he was expelled from the ANC, she told him that the struggle must continue live on SAFM. When she attended the 'secret' meeting in KZN hosted by Malema, she states that

their engaged lasted until the early hours of the morning. After hours of engagement with Malema and other individuals who were at that meeting, Hlophe also brought her political game which is grounded in years of political activism. That evening resulted in Hlophe being appointed as part of the National Command Team of the EFF. In our conversation, Hlophe stated her appointed left her surprised and confused. She recalled that when her name was mentioned she thought Malema was referring to another 'Hlengiwe'. She said: "*mina* [I], I thought I would be in a regional RCT [Regional Command Team] because that's where I belong. *Angithi* [because in] COPE, I am at a level at a region"(2017). Malema then spoke to Hlophe after the meeting and "he said: 'I am going to send you an sms then you must attend a meeting'. *Ngithi* [I said]: 'YOU ARE REFERRING TO ME?', he said: '*ja* [yes]'. Woow! 'NATIONAL! ME?'" (2017). That is how Hlophe joined the EFF in its initial stages, and as stated previously in this research inquiry, Hlophe was one of the three Black women present at the EFF's first press conference in 2013.

The surprise and shock expressed by Hlophe when elected into the National Command Team of the EFF concerned me because it speaks to Black women's subjectivity within political spaces in the country. A subjectivity that breeds insecurity because Black women are overlooked, undermined, silenced or "kicked out" as she was within the SACP and ANC for being "the loudest mouth" (Hlophe 2017). In "Sexism Reigns in Unions, Parties", Phindile Kunene argues that within political movements in South Africa " women who speak out against internal abuses and sexism are frequently ostracised and accused of engineering diversions that work in service of our oppressors", Kunene further notes that "we have witnessed subtle calls to women to 'hold their tongues'" (2015). Therefore, those external attitudes can be internalised and impact how Black women see their own political subjectivity. I must emphasise that these are my own reflections and not Hlophe's. I make this reading because Hlophe has a longer political activist life than a number of the men in the EFF, particularly in the initial stages of the party. For instance, Fana Mokoena and Kenny Kunene, were also part of the National Command Team of the EFF in 2013. Mokeona and Kunene were both in the entertainment and arts industry and they had not held political office prior to the EFF. Spokesperson of the party, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi also not held any political office or governance position outside of student and youth structures before joining the EFF. Malema and the EFF leaders present that night had to be aware that Hlophe had greater political and mobilising experience than some

of the men in the party. Therefore Malema and others appointing Hlophe into the National Command Team was not a favour to her, it was a wise political decision that favoured the growth of the EFF. Like Winnie Mandela, whom Gqola acknowledges "may have had a much longer activist life than her husband, Nelson, but patriarchally 'Mandela' is assumed to refer to him, not her" (2013:23).

Our conversation with Hlophe progressed; it led to a discussion on the strategies employed by women leading political parties and the need to be firm and aggressive in order to be taken seriously. Hlophe expressed that:

> I like people, but *ke* they take that advantage. *Ukuthi* [that] 'ooh okay it's this one'. I mean, they treat us differently to CIC [Commander in Chief] and SG [Secretary General] and DP [Deputy President]. That's why *ke* they push you to be firm, in order to have a meeting [that's] controlled. But I don't like it, I don't like doing it. (2017)

When Hlophe highlights that Black women leaders of the EFF have been treated "differently" from the men who are also leaders of the party. When members "take that advantage", Hlophe speaks to moments that represent "the talking into thin air, the talking to ears that do not hear you—the talk that is simply not listened to" that Black women have experienced in politics (hooks 1989:23). In our conversation, Hlophe also affirmed how this experience has and continued to shift in the party because of their unwillingness to tolerate disrespect. When Hlophe says "I like people", and that she dislikes being placed in positions where she has to use force in order to have controlled meetings. Hlophe echoes the "patriarchal attitudes and dominating ways of interacting with colleagues" that Black women in politics adhere to be effective (Chigudu 1997:38). She wishes for alternative forms of interaction because, as she emphasised "I don't like doing it" (2017).

However, as a demonstration of her holistic subjectivity, Hlophe political interactions have also characterised planting her "feet in defiance" (Griffin 2012: 140). In our conversation, Hlophe mentioned how she uses aggression and a loud voice as a response to her political opposition. She told me a story of her actions in one of the parliamentary committees on Social Development. While questioning the inactions of the Minister of

Social Development- Bathabile Dlamini, who she said attended a committee meeting for the first time after a significant period of absence. She recalls the experience:

> I start questioning everything, everything. I thought she [Dlamini] will be saying: 'you are out of order or something'. She was keeping quiet until one man who was serving in that committee who is in ANC. He was the only one. 'Order chair, order chair! I think honorable Maxin (I was Maxin by then) is out of order' […]. *Ngathi***:** *'HEYI WENA*! [HEY YOU] BACK-BENCHER! [...]. 'FROM NORTHERN CAPE! CHAIR, I AM NOT GOING TO BE TOLD BY THIS BACK-BENCHER. A REJECTOR FROM THE NORTHERN CAPE. WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE HERE? WE ARE EQUAL HERE. SHUT UP!'(2017)

While Hlophe was retelling the story to me and Leigh-Ann Mathys, we could not hold our laughter because she was performing reenacting the moment to us. In a very loud voice, as if she was at that committee meeting again. She narrated that: "you should have seen officials, who thought parliament is something. A woman, telling a man! You could have seen the man himself, he was shaking like this. I said: 'SHUT UP *WENA*! YOU ARE NOT THE CHAIR HERE! *NXA*! *WENA* CHAIR, I WANT ANSWERS HERE!'" (Hlophe 2017). Hlophe's actions are important because they represent a counter-narrative to imposed notions of respectability that women should follow. Women are told to be gentle, to speak softly, not to raise their voices even when challenged or disrespected for fulfilling their roles. As an MP, Hlophe was obligated to question a minister's effectiveness. In our conversation, Hlophe also spoke to the patriarchal gaze of the media in South Africa. How the media erases Black women as political subjects. Hlophe was part of a delegation of EFF leaders that visited Bonginkosi Khanyile, the student leader who spent six months in prison recently. She explains:

> We were there with CIC in Westville. The media just go: 'CIC was here with his deputy and Dali'. And the other media quoted Godrich [Gardee] and CIC, not us, not us. Let alone, they came to me. I was with Marshall [Dlamin] because I arrived early. They came to me, all of them, they know me but when they go for printing I am not there. Look at the media […] The sad part is that those media people that were dominating were female. But when they go for printing, its only Dali and Mbuyiseni, not us. (2017)

Hlophe's experience with South African is reaffirmed by statistics which show that "women constituted 22% of people quoted by the media in the local election coverage. This shows that the media still gives much greater weight to the views and opinions of men rather than women" (Gender Links 2016: 19). As our conversation progressed, I asked Hlophe to reflect on one of her proudest achievements within the party. A moment where she made things happen, even with doubt. She mentioned that one of those moments was her achievement during the 2016 Local Government Elections. Hlophe was deployed as the coordinator of Ekurhuleni Municipality, she recalls:

> I worked there, you know. We worked without a cent. And I was competing with the Deputy President and Mbuyiseni, deployed here. And I was nervous to say, what if I underperform? In the War Council CIC was always saying Ekurhuleni is very important, all the time. So that thing put pressure on me. But I was happy about the results because myself and DP, we got the same results [...]. (2017)

Hlophe was being modest when she relayed this moment to me because she actually surpassed Shivambu's results. For the purposes of the study, I reviewed the EFF's Local Elections outcomes. Shivambu was deployed in the City of Johannesburg which received 10.98% of the local vote while Ekurhuleni received 11.1% of the local vote (News24 2016). Although Hlophe and Shivambu's results were not too far apart, it must be corrected that she received a greater percentage, especially considering the constraints she experienced during campaigning process. In our conversation, Mathys affirmed Hlophe's election outcomes and highlighted that her competition, Shivambu "started with Joburg way before anyone" (2017). All national leaders of the EFF were deployed as coordinators in different parts of the country; furthermore, they had to individually fundraise for their areas. Fundraising for the election activities in Ekurhuleni was an extreme challenge for Hlophe:

> Meetings for Joburg were paid for, t-shirts, and everything. Myself I was working with zero-budget. So I was so happy after my result [...]I nearly cried when Mbuyiseni was showing me the amount he had fundraised for Tshwane. And thinking of myself, 'these people of Ekurhuleni will kill me'. Tshwane has got money, fundraised by their deployees. Joburg got money, fundraised by DP. I am the one who can't fundraise. And this thing you know, those regions they talk to

> each other. So, I said: 'guys let us work, DP at least knows to fundraise'. But I was proud after. (2017)

The difference between Ndlozi and Shivambu, and Hlophe is their political and social networks which determined who could fundraise the most for the elections. Ndlozi and Shivambu have networks which include celebrities and business people. We see some of these relationships from the people they socialise with, which are profiled in media as social networks. Furthermore, because of the patriarchal nature of South African media which Hlophe and I reflected on earlier, their public profile of is higher than Hlophe's. Therefore, when approaching individuals for financial support, Ndlozi and Shivambu are able to leverage on their popular appeal. Earlier, Hlophe recollected the first text message she sent Malema in the initial stages of the EFF, in order to establish contact. The message included the statement: "we are going to mobilise" (Hlophe). Political mobilising and 'working the ground' continues to be Hlophe's strength, as she affirmed to Malema in that text message years ago. Hlophe achieved her election outcomes because she worked with party members and leaders in Ekurhuleni to coordinate door-to-doors campaigns and community outreach. She was physically present with EFF volunteers and engaged with communities. Even though she was at a financial disadvantage, she performed incredibly.

5.6 Leigh-Ann Mathys: Treasurer General and Member of Parliament

In 2011 during South Africa's "women's month"[13] in August Ayanda Dlodlo, a former member of MK, the ANC's military wing, wrote an opinion piece for *City Press* titled: "Flowers of the Revolution" (2011). In this piece, Dlodlo evoked the legacy of women combats in MK, women who had been tortured, kidnapped and lost their lives for the liberation struggle against apartheid (2011). Furthermore, Dlodlo explains that "flowers of the revolution" was given to women involved in MK by Oliver Tambo as "a term of endearment" (2011). The EFF adopted a similar term, "roses of the revolution" in describing women who are a part of the movement. As illustrated in **Figure 4**, during the 2016 Local Government Elections, the EFF in Mpumalanga's Twitter account posted: "Operation #VoteEFF Roses of the revolution from Govern Mbeki on top of the pols

[13] Women's Month celebrates women's struggle against the colonial regime that led to the historic women's march to the governments' capital- Pretoria in 1956 against pass laws by thousands of women.

@EEFSouthAfrica" with an image of a Black woman climbing a ladder to attach a poster to a pole while other Black women secured her ladder, (2016).

Figure 4. EFF Mpumalanga's Twitter Post 2016

Leigh-Ann Mathys, the Treasurer General of the EFF however, has rejected this term publicly. Her public rejection was in response to a Tweet by the party's Secretary General-Godrich Gardee which said: "#RosesOfTheRevolution @EFFSouthAfrica" with an attached image of Mathys and Hlophe (2017). Mathys could have accepted what Dlodlo stated was a "term of endearment" (2011). Instead, as shown in **Figure. 5.** Mathys responded by stating: "this roses of the revolution thing must fall already!! We are not the decor in the revolution! We are Revolutionaries!" (2017).

Figure. 5. Leigh-Ann Mathys Twitter Post, 2017

This act by Mathys is an important articulation of the Black Feminists value of self-definition (Hill Collin, 2000: 99). . Mathys not only publicly challenged an imposed

inscription and subjectivity of being referred to as "roses" by the Secretary General of the party. The work that Mathys achieved in a single tweet included publicity defining her own subjectivity and other Black women in the EFF like myself and Chirwa who have expressed a discomfort with that term. She is calling herself and us "revolutionaries!" and not décor, therefore affirming our equal footing within the revolution for Black dignity. Mathys engages "in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from being object to being subject […] as objects, we remain voiceless—our beings defined and interpreted by others" (hooks 1989:34).

The significance of this comment is intertwined with the history of Black women in armed liberation movements in South Africa. The political subjects and warriors of the revolution were represented as the "gendered male" (Magadla 2015: 396). In her research on the experiences of women in armed liberation movements in South African, Siphokazi Magadla references Jacklyn Cock (2007) and notes that there has been little recorded history of women in exile like MK "by 1991, women are said to have constituted 20% of MK membership. Cock's study reveals that women were under-represented in positions of leadership and authority in MK, and this was true too in the parent body (ANC) more broadly" (2015:394). Furthermore, Magadla noted that in her interviews for her research, former women combatants stressed "the fact that analyses of women in the MK often focus on women as unequal participants within the organisation, often with the danger of erasing the transformative impact that women had within the space in terms of altering conservative gender relations" (2015: 396). I believe the names attached to women combats like "flowers", instead of revolutionaries or warriors like men in liberation movements contributed the representation of women as unequal actors within military wings. In fact, one of the women combatants Magadla interviews explained: "in as much as we were called flowers of the revolution – the mighty few – we were treated as equals through training, leading and every other way" (2015: 396).Therefore, Mathys' public statement facilitates an environment where women in the EFF will no longer have their subjectivity imposed but be seen as equals.

My conversation with Mathys' in a hotel room with Hlophe was interesting. While working in parliament, I did not have an opportunity to work with Mathys, unlike Hlophe. However watching her from a far, the image I had of Mathys was the woman who was constantly busy juggling multiple roles in the EFF. From afar, I found Mathys as cool. I

viewed her personality as a challenge to hierarchal relationships within the party, not because I heard her express those words but through her actions. At EFF events at times, Mathys would approach and join me for a smoke, where we would both commit to quitting our terrible habit. At such events, we also shared moments where we Mathys would complement me on an item of clothing I was wearing. When I arrived at the hotel room after three days of plenum, Mathys was drinking champagne. She offered me a glass of champagne but I did not hear her, when our recorded conversation concluded Mathys and Hlophe asked why I had not drank the glass that she poured. I expressed that I was unsure if the glass was intended for me, so I did not want to overstep (because they are my 'Commissars'). They laughed and said that I should have my glass. After our conversation for the purposes of the research inquiry, I stayed at their room and we continued talking. Our conversation shifted to reflecting on the possible actions the EFF can implement in order improve their advocacy on gender justice. As the evening progressed, I suggested they watch a small documentary on women in Marikana and they agreed. We had a wonderful evening. Similarly to Hlophe, Mathys entry into the EFF was out of her own political will and agency, she too was not invited into the space, she inserted herself and claimed ownership of it.

Mathys' background is in development work and civil society. She had no history of involvement in party politics. Prior to the EFF, Mathys was a fundraiser for rural NGO's or community based organisations with a special focus on food security. Mathys worked with NGO's like Food 4 Africa in South Africa where she was a Funding and Project Manager. Through her work in civil society, Mathys states that:

> I realised that we must stop begging for crumbs, like there needed to be political action. There has to be a political solution. You can't be going to go and beg *heh* […] Lonmin for example to go and build a school that's just down the road from where they are mining. That shouldn't be, there should be a political solution for that. (2017)

The will to go into the party political terrain, a kind of wilderness for her was driven by that desire for political solutions and actions. The Marikana Massacre was moment where her desire moved to action. She followed the events in Marikana that led to the deaths of 34 Black mineworkers in a sense rage. She retells how she was following Malema and Shivambu's activities in Marikana on the media, inspired by the vision of 'economic

freedom in our lifetime' and trying to find ways to assist. She called a friend who knew Malema and Shivambu in order for her to put her in contact with them. Then she had a phone conversation with Malema and said in laughter that "he thought I was a white person" because of the way she spoke and her name (2017). She laughs while telling us that while on the phone: "he said: 'alright, I'll call you back'. Then I called my friend and said: '*aah* please tell him I am not an agent'" (2017). She was relentlessly committed to contributing to this political moment. Mathys noted that joining the EFF was because the "EFF was speaking my language rather than EFF convincing me that this is what needs to be done. So, it was something that I had subscribed to even before it was formed" (2017). After persisting on her quest, Malema then invited Mathys to a meeting in Braamfontein where the EFF was putting together a Gauteng structure. She was appointed within that structure that evening. After a few days of working and interaction with other leaders of the EFF, she was asked to join the National Task Team where she organised the first EFF People's Assembly in Johannesburg in 2013.

Because Mathys was not in party politics prior to the EFF, she noted how she "didn't speak much" but "was good at organising and doing, but learning" (2017). However she expressed that: "I mean now, I can talk", when she echoed those words, I reaffirmed her. I mentioned that I watched her chair the plenum on the last day with pride. She owned the platform. She noted that she reached this level "because I have baptized myself into it and I have learnt" (2017). She emphasised that her limited speech in the beginning of her journey in the EFF should not be interpreted as the lack of self-esteem or a lack of belief in her intelligence. In Mathys theorisation of Black women in politics, she challenges the notions that women have to be "be more confident" as if they do not possess that confidence (2017). She rejects the popular perception that women are not confident in politics; instead she shifts the blame to patriarchal systems, men's egos and their obsessive desires for their voices to be the loudest in the room.

In our conversation, I asked Mathys if she believes that Black women are too critical of themselves in politics, therefore resulting in doubting their own capabilities. Her response was: "no, we must ask the men why do they just keep thinking they are so good when they are not" (2017). The three of us all broke out in laughter because we

recognised the truth in the statement, and we realised that we also fall into this trap by internalising patriarchal speak. . Mathys continues to argue:

> I don't think it's a bad thing. Not that we must be hard on ourselves, but it's a good thing to be critical of ourselves because it allows us to grow […]I know that I am very clever but it doesn't mean that I know everything, and it doesn't mean that I can't learn something better. (2017)

In our conversation, Mathys highlighted her organisational skills which the EFF has benefited from. Part of the fraught terrain of South African party politics, has been stadium wars conducted by different political parties to compete and to demonstrate which political party can fill up a stadium with the most supporters. The language of #FillUp, has also been evident with South African rapper Cassper Nyovest who achieved his goal to #FillUpOrlando stadium in Soweto through concert which solely featured local artists (eNCA 2016). News headlines such as "Size Does Matter: EFF Aims to Fill Orlando Stadium to Capacity" dominated the 2016 local government elections and journalists paid attention to which party's supporters could 'fill up' a stadium (Essop 2016). In this particular piece on Eyewitness News, Essop noted how the EFF:

> Has been drumming up support for its election manifesto launch this weekend as it aims to fill the 40,000 capacity Orlando Stadium. It follows similar events by the party's political rivals - the African National Congress (ANC) and Democratic Alliance (DA) - in the build-up to Local Government Elections on 3 August. The governing party could not fill the 46,000 seater Nelson Mandela Bay stadium in Port Elizabeth, while the DA drew more than 20,000 supporters to the 30,000 capacity Rand Stadium in Johannesburg. The ANC has blamed the lower than expected turnout on transport complications. (2016)

In fact the EFF was able to #FillUpOrlandoStadium, reporter Greg Nicolson wrote that the EFF: "launched its local government election manifesto at Orlando Stadium, Soweto[…] the Fighters won the battle for festivities and filling up a stadium" (2016). I highlight the stadium wars and EFF successes in demonstrating its member's loyalty because Mathys has been central to organising significant events in the EFF. This includes the manifesto launch in Orlando mentioned by Nicolson. Mathys stated the Orlando manifesto launch was one of her most proud moments and argues:

> There's nothing that we have ever done in this party that is not teamwork. Like, there is nothing [...] filling up Orlando Stadium [with] that transport thing *ooh* Lord! It's just the worst job in the entire world of getting people in. So you there and like 'how come the transport rrrrrr whatever?' and then just walking out is like 'ooh my God, the stadium is full, screw if the rest of the buses don't come, I don't care'. So those moments when we pull off successful rallies is always good, but I am always just tired so I don't even really get to enjoy it. (2017)

Mathys' work ethic in the EFF not only relates to ensuring the party's national events are a success. She also demonstrated her drive to build the EFF during the local government elections. She articulated that her achieved outcome in the 2016 elections is a victory she continues to be proud of. Mathys explains:

> I was responsible for elections as a province. I was deployed to Rustenburg which was my municipality, and my competition was the President [Malema] […] He was deployed to Capricorn and we had the same number of Wards, I think. We both had 45 Wards, I think. Or something like that. I was always trying to keep up with him, anyway, he beat me by 2%. So I am talking mainly about municipalities, not the province. So he got 26%, I got 24%. So we were the highest in terms of percentages for our municipalities. But it was a lot of work, it was exhausting. And then it was being the finance, and then we had in between, its paying for all of this election stuff. I mean, there were some parts of the night I would have to prepare, submitting all the councilor. You know how many councilors we had? We had to submit like 407 Ward Councilors, 407 PR Councillors, for the whole of North West. Then at the same time I must pay for food parcels for the whole country. For, hmmm what was this thing? The election, that voter registration day. (2017)

As we see from the narration by Mathys, she fulfills multiple roles within the organisation, at times resulting in her lack of sleep. In our conversation, I posed some of the questions to my research inquiry. I asked Mathys if she believed that gendered relations define the hierarchy of power within the EFF. In her response, she expressed that the EFF has promoted Black women's leadership in order to challenge hierarchies of power, speaking to the party's commitment to gender parity. However, Mathys mentioned that in the EFF, there is a perception that women who do notable work and are in positions of power within the organisation because they have slept with a man in leadership. She recalls:

> When I first got to EFF, there was this perception that I hooked up with Dumisane*. I mean, so there is that thing. So you almost have to prove your keep. It was that thing of, also 'who is she?'. That whole sort of thing.

> So not, it takes a while. So now, there is no one in this whole country that can say that I am lazy. Like, you almost have to prove that you capable.[14]

What is evident from what Mathys recounts are the ways in which patriarchy works to delegitimise women's leadership positions. Mathys also speaks to the need for Black women in political position to constantly justify their presence. Leaders of the party such as Ndlozi who is called "the people's bae", is also acknowledged for his physical appearance (Madibogo 2016). Yet his title as "the people's bae" does not work to deligitimise his position in the party, as well as his intellectual and political abilities. No one questions who Ndlozi has "hooked up" within the party to for his place in the party because of the privilege offered by his gender. Mathys will be recorded one of the women in the movement whose presence has significantly contributed to the growth of the EFF. As Mathys continues to work extremely hard to build the EFF and my hope for her is to find guidance in the words echoed by Audre Lorde in 1988. She famously said: "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde 1988:131)

[14] *Names changed

6. Conclusion and Discussion: A Call for African Feminist Movement Building and Imagination

In this research inquiry, I firstly explored how the EFF views and articulates gender in its policies, political advocacy and practice within the call for Black justice in South Africa. My investigation consisted of a textual analysis of the EFF's key documents which comprised of: the founding manifesto, constitution, election manifestos, declarations as well as policy positions. To investigate this question further, I engaged in participatory observations of EFF events. It was important to examine the pattern in the language and discourse within party structures of the EFF in relation to gender. Through my analysis, it became apparent that the EFF centres class and race in their theoretical grounding. This theoretical foundation informs the party's interpretations to structural exclusion facing the Black majority in South Africa as well their political programs. By solely centring race and class systems of oppression in their theoretical outlook, I indicated that the EFF presents gendered oppression as a supplementary factor in their "radical, leftist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist" character (EFF 2013).

I located the privileging of race and class as the main sources of systematic oppression to the EFF's chosen ideological grounding of Marxism, Leninism, and Fanonianism. I argued that it has allowed for the EFF to give pedagogical authority to men who failed to speak to the forms of gendered oppression experienced by Black South Africans. I continued to demonstrate how this ideological l decision has resulted in an ideological vacuum in the party's approach in relation to structural challenges facing Black women in the country. I argued that Marxist-Leninism and Fanonianism on their own are inadequate interpretative tools to analyse the systematic forms of oppression experienced by the majority of the population in the country, Black women.

In this research inquiry continued to argue that the interpretive terrain of the EFF cannot continue to focus solely on race and class, because our society requires "a re-sharpening of our interpretative lenses accompanied by a refining of the tools we use to demolish the status quo" (Gqola 2002: 1). Like former Black emancipatory projects, the EFF cannot continue to place the gravity of race and class while minimising the seriousness of gender

in discourse, as all these forms of oppression speak directly to our socio-economic realities in South Africa. Therefore, it is my view that the EFF needs to broaden its gender discourse. That process should begin by looking and amplifying theories developed by Black Feminists and African Feminists in order to sharpen these party's contradictions. Although the EFF has correctly supported the decriminalisation of sex work, sexual reproduction rights, Queer Black bodies, special offence courts for rape; it also needs to sharpen its ideological stance.

I also demonstrate how this theoretical limitation in relation to gender has influenced the EFF's election manifesto and political discourse. I highlighted the 28% rating the EFF received on the promotion of gender awareness in their manifesto for the 2016 Local Government Election (Gender Links 2016:7). The EFF was even surpassed by ANC which was rated as the leading political party which promoted gender awareness in their election manifesto at 44% (Gender Links 2016:7). As I indicated earlier in this research inquiry, EFF Deputy President Floyd Shivambu admitted to analysing the nature of capitalism in South Africa through in gender neutral lens, after an intervention by Naledi Chirwa at an EFF Plenum in 2017. Additionally, spokesperson of the party, Mbuyiseni Ndlozi acknowledged that members of the party not being "so strong" in relation to the struggles facing the Black Queer community and gender nonconforming people, unlike their demonstrated commitment to workers' rights. I recall these moments for the reasons articulated by Gqola, who As emphasises that "it becomes important, then, to move beyond simply identifying what the problems are to identifying ways in which we can address them" (2002: 2). Therefore the EFF needs to begin to crafting solutions to these ideological and political vacuums.

When I think of the party's limited theoretical and ideological articulation in relation to gendered oppression, I am reminded of a conversation I had with Ncebakazi Manzi in a meeting among BC activists in Soweto last year (2016) at Black House Collective. Manzi said to us: "I wish that when I read Steve Biko for the first time […] I read him alongside Black Feminist thinkers and activist. I would have done so many things differently" (2016). Manzi is one of four Black women who conceptualised Black Wash and what later became the SNI, a Black Conscious movement questioning the kind of "democracy" and "freedom" that Black South Africans achieved in the post-apartheid dispensation.

Ironically, the most publically known figure of this movement is Andile Mngxitama who is also a former MP of the EFF[15]. It is less known that it was four Black women that founded this movement. Black Wash began in 2008 because this activist collective believed that "1994 changed *fokol* [nothing]" for Black people who are still landless and are still the faces of poverty after ANC rule (Manzi 2016). They popularised Black Consciousness through movement building, t-shirts, events, seminars and through mainstream media (Manzi 2016).

I share this narrative because it has direct implications to the conversation on the ways in which movements focused on Black emancipation such as the BCM and EFF articulate or omit gendered analysis in their political discourse. Like Manzi, I first read the works of Steve Biko, Robert Sobukwe and Frantz Fanon before Black Feminist and African Feminist literature. Amongst the people involved in the initial conceptualisation of the EFF, I wonder how many people had read Black Feminist and African Feminist thinkers alongside Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Frantz Fanon? If they had done so with interest, how would it have influenced the theoretical grounding of the party? As Gqola notes, "the task of decentring white and/or male sources as repositories of expert knowledge" is urgent, in order to achieve this "Amina Mama, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Pat McFadden and Dzodzi Tsikata often sit next to Frantz Fanon, Claude Ake, Steve Biko and Mahmood Mamdani" (2002: 2).

As argued earlier, the party needs to make a substantive investment into this work because their proposed solution of hiring "an intern" would be insufficient. This clearer perspective will then influence how the party interprets the struggles and needs of Black people in South Africa in holistic ways. It will also influence the party's analysis and political programs. In the 2019 National Government elections, we I hope will improve its gender mainstreaming practices in its manifesto where it can significantly shift its rating of 28% in relation to awareness and future election manifestos, as I demonstrated earlier, the EFF failed to mainstream gender in their 2016 Local Government elections (Gender Links 2016:7).

[15] See a news article by *Sapa* "EFF suspends Mngxitama" (2015) accessed on: http://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/2015/02/17/eff-suspends-mngxitama

My second research inquiry into the EFF sought to understand the culture of the EFF , whether it provided an enabling environment for women to thrive within the party, as legitimate political subjects. In my analysis, I argued that the heavily masculine image of the EFF that South Africa was first introduced to during the party's first press conference in July 2013 has shifted over the years. I demonstrate that the EFF has centred gender representation and parity as the main vehicle to provide an enabling environment to Black women in the party. This commitment to gender representation has led to the EFF to their rank as the leading political party to achieve gender parity within their party lists in the 2016 Local Government Elections at 49% gender parity (Gender Links 2016: 5). I emphasised the significance of this principle adopted by the EFF to ensure gender representation in its political and governance structures.

However, through the scholarship of African Feminists, I demonstrated the limitations of solely relying on gender representation mechanisms for the EFF based on experiences in South Africa and Uganda (Lewis 1999; Tamale 1999; Salo and Lewis 2002; Makhunga 2015). I showcase Black women's representation in leadership positions within the EFF needs to move beyond acquiring balanced numbers. As former ANC MP and anti-apartheid activist Thenjiwe Mtintso stressed that within our new democracy, the "presence and even representation of some vague category called 'woman' does not necessarily suppose a gender transformation agenda, as women do not necessarily represent or even have a common understanding of patriarchy and gender relations" (2003: 571). Through my reading of African Feminists literature on gender representation, political subjectivity and gender justice, I recommended that the EFF to invest in an African Feminist theoretical and policy agenda that challenges all interconnected forms of oppression in order to facilitate an enabling environment for Black women in the EFF and gender justice in the country.

This process will also work to challenge the deeply embedded patriarchal biases that are present within party members. Therefore the EFF needs to consider the "gendering of black protest politics in South Africa in a substantive way that takes into account the production of ideas and thought" (April 2012: 115). As Mama argues, our societies have "remained largely untouched by the potentially transformative insights of feminist scholarship"; I argue that her analysis can also be applied to political parties such as the EFF (Mupotsa 2010: 14). Once the party has clarified their theoretical position in relation

to gendered oppression in South Africa, it needs to host political education workshops with its branches and leaders across the country to ensure that it becomes part of the party's daily language. In 2013, it was reported that the EFF would host political education workshops through "a combination of Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin and Frantz Fanon writings will guide the workshops" (Nandipha 2013). Therefore the same principle and sense of investment needs to apply to workshops on the gendered nature of society. As emphasised by Mente during our conversation:

> You can get a book of Steve Biko but you don't get a book of a Black Conscious person who is a woman. I was even shocked to find that, within the men, the first Black people to graduate in Fort Hare there was a woman. I am like, *webana,* there's a woman within the first Black group of people to graduate at Fort Hare. There a woman. But those things are never there, you only get told of Robert Mugabe this and that. It's always men men men men. (2017)

In conversation with Liepollo Lebohang Pheko she said: "we need to reframe the national question- gender should be a national question" (2016). If the party has true intentions for working towards the total liberation of Black South Africans than it needs to self-correct quickly and it needs to contribute to making gender "a national question" as Pheko affirms (2016). This is particularly crucial because gender has been a depoliticised and commodified subject within South African public discourse (Gqola 2002: 2). In this context, it becomes "necessary to constantly stress the impossibility of understanding national, class and global contradictions without posing the question of women's oppression" (Mbilinyi 1985: 78).

The EFF needs to challenge and dismantle the "entrenched colonial myths and exclusionary practices that mark African women as persons who dare not imagine themselves as intellectuals and makers of theory - the very stuff that informs both policy and access to critical resources in our societies" (McFadden 2002:2). In order to do so, it becomes crucial for the party to explore Black and African Feminist theories because of its readings of structural oppression which articulate a language and a sense of urgency in confronting challenges to Black women in South Africa today. If the party continues to underplay and ignore these theories, it will be ill-equipped to achieve "economic freedom" for all Black people. Furthermore, it will be unable to dismantle "patriarchy" and "sexism" which it defines as enemies of the revolution envisioned by the party.

The third research question I explored in this research inquiry was the views of women in the EFF on hierarchies of power within the organisation. I was interested in understanding if women in the EFF believed that gender and gendered relations define the hierarchy of power within the EFF. In my conversations with nine Black women leaders from the party, I received mixed and unfixed responses. These responses worked to challenge "the perspective of oppression and power is over simplistic, as the modes with which power relations take shape […] are often multiple, located and unfixed" (Mupotsa 2007: 126).

Two women serving in different regions in the Western Cape highlighted that "k*um siyafana*[to me we are the same]" and expressed "we are equal" (2017). However, in conversation with a younger Black woman leader in the Tshwane region, she stated that "men *nje bathanda into le yokuthi [they like saying]* that they won't be led by a woman especially *masewumcane nje* [when you are young]. It's like that" (2017). Hlengiwe Hlophe the DSG of the party highlighted that the EFF has provided an enabling environment for Black women like her "just to lead" (2017). Hlophe continued to note that "in parliament, so most of the time, *mina* [I] as a Whip there. CIC when he is not around, he sends me to go and represent him in most of the high panel meetings" (2017). However, this space to led, again, is "multiple, located and unfixed" and Hlophe explored those recounted those negotiated locations in her profile (Mupotsa, 2007: 126). For instance, when Hlophe expressed that:

> They [MPs] treat us differently to CIC and SG and DP. That's why *ke* they push you to be firm, in order to have a meeting [that's] controlled. But I don't like it, I don't like doing it. (2017)

Within this research inquiry, I have also been preoccupied with engaging in research that does not work to denigrate Black women in the EFF, research which represents them as passive beings without individual and political agency. In doing so, I have spoken to the various ways that Black women within the EFF participate in building the movement. I have also presented the ways in which Black women articulate their agency, challenge patriarchal power as well as the strategies they have employed to build the EFF. As Susan Andrade argues, in nationalist movements in Africa for the purpose of decolonisation, "women's culture and politics were often understood as unrelated to nationalism, and, therefore, as not engaged in the larger political process" (2002:45). Black women in the

EFF that I have featured in this study have worked to challenge this historical bias that Andrade highlights. Mama confirms this, writing "in African contexts, feminism has emerged out of women's deep engagement with and commitment to national liberation" (2002:1). Black women in the EFF form part of the nationalist struggle in South Africa to achieve economic freedom for the Black majority who remain the faces of poverty in South Africa.

In the autobiographical profiles of six women leaders of the EFF, they narrated the ways in which their access and articulate their power, which at most times has been about the principle of hard work and movement building. Chirwa, Sonti and Mente articulated their experiences of ensuring they build solidarity, community and affirm other Black women in their work. Hlophe spoke to the ways in which power is negotiated, how at times she dislikes having to use force or aggression when chairing meetings, however due to some members treating Black women leaders "differently" and "taking advantage" they employ tactics as strategy. Hlophe also referenced moments in parliament were she utilized resistance as a strategy which resulted in an EFF MP men "shacking'" after she told him to "SHUT UP WENA! BACK BENCHER!" Sonti on the other hand utilizes her social and emotional intelligence in order to achieve results for the party because chooses not to use force. Mashego accesses and exercises her power through direct and immediate confrontation. Another site has been acquiring further education for power and freedom for Black women in the EFF, as Mente emphasized that one of the resolutions to a women's gathering they hosted was that "they must go to school" (2017). Mente also narrated a story Malema shared with them as motivation:

> He says: 'you know they made fun of me but today I have a degree. They made fun of my weight, called me all names. Today I am here, my weight is shred off. They are still making fun of EFF, we are going to build it. With you, all of you. Go and develop yourself. All of you, go to school'

In 2016, Shireen Hassim asked the question:

> Whether the Economic Freedom Fighters, the radical new kids on the political bloc, can offer any hope for beleaguered feminists. The signs are not promising. This first and obvious point to make is that the EFF is driven by the same team that brought us '100% Zuluboy.' It is a team, moreover, led by Julius Malema who was taken to the Equality Court for his comments on women and sexual

> consent, and who made the infamous statement that the word intersexed did not exist in the Pedi language and hence it was unAfrican. (2016)

While Hassim has contributed plenty to the Feminist scholarship in the country, her dismissal of the EFF based on the men who lead the party is disappointing. Correctly so, the history of leaders such as Malema is questionable, effectively it has worked to denigrate Black women's dignity, and indeed his track record raises many doubts. However, Hassim works to erase and delegitimise Black women's agency in the party by simply placing the future of the EFF on past decisions and actions of men leading the EFF. Decisions and actions that the Black women leading the EFF had no influence over because they were not part of "the team" that Hassim states resulted in Malema's actions. As I have highlighted in the featured profiles of women leading the EFF, these women have various leadership and political backgrounds, therefore the EFF is hardly "driven by the same team" as the ANCYL as Hassim suggests. Her assessment works to delegitimise the work of the women that I have engaged with in the study and the thousands of women who work to build the EFF. Women who have echoed an African Feminist consciousness and women work towards questioning patriarchal power and violence (within and outside of the EFF), as well as work to restore the dignity of Black women in the country.

As someone who has publicly claimed to be an African Feminist and who has organised with other African Feminists, I am often asked why I am in a party such as the EFF which is perceived as not embodying any Feminist consciousness. I have answered by listing demonstrated moments of an African Feminist consciousness in the EFF by Black women- publicly and privately. The EFF has shown us some moments of expressions of an Africanist Feminist consciousness, moments that I wished I had more space to engage with on this study. For instance, in 2015 the EFF had multiple engagements with domestic workers in townships such as Alexandra, these gatherings were filled with a majority of Black women because they have continued to be the faces of domestic work. Black women working as domestic workers in South Africa "are still among the most exploited of all workers in South Africa, labouring hours for paltry pay and often enduring abuse from their employers" (Dodd 2010:471). Black women's hard labour and exploitation is justified because unlike the white women, they cannot be absolved "from material toil" (Ally 2013:344). This gathering was organised by Black women leading the party such as Mandisa Mashego and it was crucial. Another instance was when Mashego organised a

protest in 43 police stations around Gauteng against the handling of rape cases by the police in 2016. In our conversation Mashego highlighted that: "outside each police station were females, whether they were 5 or 20 but they were women protesting with their placards […] this is a problem with this police station. When you bring cases [they are not dealt with]…" (2017).

Another instance that I have seen this African Feminist consciousness is during a protest by women councillors of the EFF. Pulane Mokolopi, Ouma Nkitsing and Mpho Billot undressed in protest because the council speaker of the Mahikeng Local Council indicated what council members should wear. They noted that "female councillors must wear formal dress and male councillors a tie and jacket", furthermore, "council rules also require that councillors not wear canvas shoes, political party-promoting attire, hats and caps, and that their hair must always be combed" (Tshehle 2016). Ouma Nkitsing is quoted by news outlets as having said that she felt insulted because the speaker "cannot come and impose English laws on us. They could not even define the formal dress code" (Tshehle 2016). Nkitsing said that after the bouncers were sent for them they decided to undress in protest because they "felt that they will accept us if we wear our natural selves which is our best suits" (Tshehle 2016). Because Nkitsing was unemployed prior to her deployment as an EFF councillor she said that she "cannot afford their expensive suits that their laws want us to wear, so wearing nothing is the cheapest clothes that I can wear" (Tshehle 2016).

African women have a long history of undressing and even being naked in protest (Bakare-Yusuf 2001; Mupotsa 2017), this particular protest was reminiscent of that genealogy of African Feminist protest. However it was disappointing to find that the party had not written a statement on their website about the significance of this protest and its demonstrating Black women's agency. It could have also been a moment to highlight African women's historical protest strategies and the use of the body. Black women in the EFF student command like Naledi Chirwa challenging the gender neutral analysis of capitalism by Shivambu and asserting Black women in student movements as highlighted in her profile. Black women like Amanda Mavuso in the EFF Student Command who are coming into Black Feminism and who stated that: "me being so outspoken and taking the forefront when protesting is seen as a taboo that side [Tshwane University of

Technology Soshanguve Campus]. I am labelled an 'attention seeker' and very disrespectful towards men just because I can stand up for myself and the other women" (2017). When EFF MP's like Makoti Khawula add gendered dimensions to water and sanitation issues impacting Black people in rural and township when giving their parliamentary speeches (2016). Moments of an articulated African Feminist consciousness have not only been in relation to women only in the EFF, Chirwa for instance publicly congratulated the youngest Member of Parliament from the DA, a Black woman by the name of Hlomela Bucwa when she was sworn into parliament, Chriwa noted that: "I tweeted that… I congratulate this girl regardless that we are from different parties, because of the fact she is a black girl" (2017). While Mathys and Hlophe expressed sadness, sympathy and rage with the minister of Social Development- Bathabile Dlamini who was verbally attacked by community members in Port Elizabeth for the ANC's unfilled promises, they acknowledged that as a Black women in politics, she is an easier target and Mathys questioned "why don't they even do it to that Zuma to start off with" (2017). The EFF has also stated that: "the EFF calls on all companies and state departments to review salaries and give women the same salaries that men receive for the same jobs" (Ndlozi, 2016).There are other moments that I could have enlisted here, however there are still limited in scale and in national reach.

As Pumla Gqola argues, in order to dismantle systems of oppression, African feminisms should occupy "an increasingly public face; what leads to failure are exclusionist, private or piecemeal tactics" (2002:1). In a piece titled "Local Elections Show that South Africa's Women Continue to Play Second Fiddle," Lisa Vetten argues that "the EFF demonstrates commitment to women's representation. Yet female EFF leaders, who are powerful and articulate individuals in their own right, play second fiddle to the party's male national leadership" (2016). As I demonstrate earlier in this report, there are instances where Black women leaders of the EFF have been rendered nameless by South African media. Furthermore, the women that I was in conversations with in this study expressed their frustration at South African media outlets that has invisibilised them. I agree with them that South African media still reinforces a patriarchal lens to political leadership, an argument that has also been made by media institutions such as Media Monitoring Africa (2016). However, the responsibility cannot be placed on the media alone the EFF also has a role to play in ensuring that Black women leading the EFF are at the centre of our

political discourse. For instance, on the 22 November there were two parliamentary debates that the EFF was participating in as shown in **Figures 6.** and **7**. One was on 16 Days of Activism against Women and Children and the second was a motion against apartheid laws by Floyd Shivambu. Both of these debates were screened live on television, but from the EFF twitter page, one was live tweeted and that was Shivambu's. Why was a debate on the status of women in the country not live tweeted within the EFF's official Twitter account? As Zine Magubane reminds us, the choices we make in terms of representation "work as an effect of power" (2004:4)

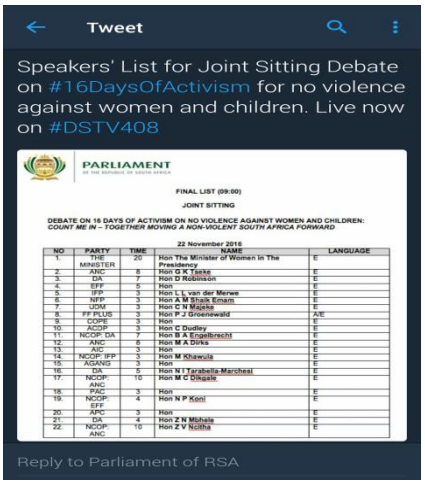

Figure. 6. Parliament of South Africa's Twitter Post, 2016 **Figure. 7. EFF Official Account's Twitter Post, 2016**

Furthermore, by looking at the EFF's YouTube page, one can see that the individuals whose ideas, presentations and activities that have been featured the most are Malema's, Shivambu and Ndlozi. Ndlozi's presentation titled "Cmsr Ndlozi addressing the South African Sociological Association on 'The New Left'" which comes in five parts has even been featured on the page (2015). The EFF's YouTube audience then is able to access the political discourse and activities of Black men leaders of the party, with limited representation of those of Black women leaders of the party.

The EFF has been recognised as a media savvy political organisation. In 2015, South African news broadcaster noted that "the year in news wouldn't be complete without Julius Malema and his party the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)" (eNCA 2015). Therefore the EFF needs to use their own media platforms to ensure that they promote the work of Black women within the party, furthermore, they need to use their media savvy strategies make a greater effort in promoting Black women leaders of the party. The EFF has proven to the country how media savvy it is and its ability to grasp the

nation's attention. Therefore, the EFF media and Malema need to contemplate on the ways in which the organisation and Malema as an individual can create strategies to shift the gaze of the media. They would shift this gaze in order in order for Black women leaders of the party to be acknowledged, to be rendered visible instead of nameless MP's as I highlighted earlier. This act will not mean that Malema is giving women leaders anything; it would indicate a practice of ethical, political and public responsibility. As a leader of the EFF, he has a responsibility towards his organisation. How is he publicly referencing Black women leaders of the EFF in press conferences, in media interviews, on social media and at events? Who is constantly at his side? It is important to reference Black women leaders of the EFF, to address them publicly, to say their names and acknowledge their work- not in paternalistic ways, but in ways that are transformative which will lead to society knowing their names and their political ideas. We need to know their names; society cannot miss an opportunity to know their names. He and the EFF have a role in shifting the public perception of Black women leading the EFF.

During my in-depth conversations with Black women leaders in the EFF, there was an articulation of missing focus on Black women within the party. In conversation with Mathys and Hlophe, I asked them what their vision was for Black women in the country. I also asked them what they hope to achieve for Black women in the country, as women leaders in the party but also as the EFF. For instance, Hlophe states:

> Heyi. To tell you the truth, we always talk with Leigh-Ann u*kuthi*[that] I think we are not playing our role in terms of tapping into that. It's not because we don't want to, but I think, most of the time we are carried away by the work of the organisation. But we are failing women of South Africa. (2017)

Mathys responds:

> I raised that in parliament when we had that debate. And then what are we doing? We are here, we can't even, we haven't even provided sanitary pads. What are we doing? We can't even give. I mean, most of the legislatures and I raised that in women's parliament too. All our legislatures, all the speakers are pretty much women right? […] But what are we doing now that we are there? It's like we are just warming chairs. So that really is something that's on my mind, like it really does bother me. And I, we must find some sort of solution to that and we must push to do those things. (2017)

There was also an expressed sense of sadness and guilt where they both expressed that they 'hated' themselves for not doing enough for Black women in the country:

> And it's very very hurting. I have many friends mina, who are unemployed. They tell me their stories all their time, like a friend. And it's very hurtful to me to say, this woman is telling me her plight but I don't have a way forward to help her [...] And that ministry [of women] does not have tangible things to help. (Hlophe 2017)

The role of Black women leading political parties and in institutions of power is complex. The sense of guilt articulated by Hlophe and Mathys is not unique to them as women in politics, for example Thenjiwe Mtintso also articulates this sense of "guilt" (2003). Mtintso questioned the "contribution that ANC women MPs made to the transformation of gender relations both in Parliament and in South African society" and she noted that "one of the questions that the study raised was whether the ANC women represented any particular women's interests" (2003: 569). Within her inquiry, she was reflective of her own role and position, she expressed that: "when I visit ANC constituencies I experience a feeling of guilt about my privileged position and about my claim to represent their interests as women" (2003: 563).

Mente also articulated that she wished she had more time to visit Black women in her branch, to listen to them about their needs and challenges, as well as to co-strategize with them. She also noted that she was planning on engaging Black women in her branch last year but could not due to her intense workload. As demonstrated in their profiles, Black women leading the EFF have shown intense commitment to their work in the EFF and have delivered outstanding results for the party. However, these women have expressed that they have achieved significant outcomes in relation to their work in the party but a sadness that they haven't achieved the same outcomes in relation to Black women who they deeply desire to make substantive changes in their lives. Mathys even stated that: "ultimately I could like easily just drop being a TG and just focus on doing that [work to achieve gender justice]" (2017).

Mathys and other Black women within the party should not be placed in a position where they have to choose between performing their current duties and mobilizing with Black women for gender justice. As Mama has articulated that for women in political space's

the "capacity for pursuing gender agendas remains severely constrained, in ways that reflect the inherent biases of political systems that have historically excluded women" (Mama 2004:3). Therefore, the EFF has to work to gender mainstream their political discourse and programs, which will allow the incorporation of gender justice in the positions and time of leaders within the party. The commitment to gender mainstreaming and gender justice shouldn't also be work assigned to Black women within the party because it will place an extra workload to women who are already performing miracles for the party. It should be the responsibility of everyone. Debilitating guilt is gendered, Black women are made to feel guilty for not being in their homes because they are working, they are made to feel like inadequate partners because they are working, and they are also made to feel inadequate in their work around gender justice because their efforts have been shifted elsewhere. It's important for gender justice to be mainstreamed within the party's political work because someone like Malema is not asked to help Black men, he is not told or believes that he is 'failing Black men', because issues affecting Black men are already part of his work. The ideology that he and the party preach is centred on race and class already gives affirmation to Black men. Gender justice for the benefit of Black women should not feel like additional work to Black women leading the party, it should be ingrained within the party's daily processes and language.

The ANC has been critiqued for visiting poor communities only during elections in order to secure their votes. While the EFF was critiqued for its actions in its first year of existence in 2013, "its articulation with protests oscillated between electoral opportunism and authentic solidarity. Malema and his entourage still appear to parachute into "hotspots" to show solidarity rather than allowing themselves to become part of and shaped by the rebellion" (Nieftagodien 2015: 454). Therefore, the EFF cannot approach work to ensure gender justice as a seasonal or periodic event to be highlighted only during women's month; it needs to ensure that the party regularly has time to do this work. Black women in the EFF have expressed that they desire more time in their schedule to regularly engage with Black women particularly in rural and township areas. If this time was incorporated into their roles and position then it would work to shift national consciousness by not only mainstreaming gender but also reimagining what it means to be a woman in politics in South Africa today. Engaging with Black women, collaborating and movement building will allow Black women in the EFF to have a

different support base. As highlighted, the media defines political leadership through a masculinist lens where the voices of Black women in politics are rendered invisible; therefore by having a support base of women around the country will allow Black women leading the EFF to construct a different kind of social capital.

Furthermore, by having this social base that is constantly engaging with ways to achieve a gender just society, they will not have to be that "superwoman" that saves Black women. Black women on the ground will help with the thinking, strategy and mobilising for gender justice because it can never be an individual effort. In questioning her role as a Black woman in power Thenjiwe Mtintso highlighted that within Black women in politics, "the tendency exists to speak for and about these women without attempting to let them speak for themselves" (2003: 573). Therefore Black women leaders in the EFF engaging with Black women in grassroots will work to avoid the perpetuation of the tendencies that Mtintso highlights. Equally, Black women in the EFF will get the nourishment that they desire from other Black women. They can also host spaces where they do not have to pretend they have it all together, that they are superwomen, spaces where they too can take off their bra's and strategize. As Gqola notes, the importance of Black women's spaces and activism is that we can use such spaces "to garner strength for our other, more public forms of activism. They are necessary for the strength-gathering required to proceed with any kind of public activist work and as such are a necessary part of our project. However, they should not be an end in themselves" (2002: 2). This work will then form part of the shifting not only of the institutional culture within the EFF but it will shift our national gender discourse.

In conversation with EFF women leaders from the Western Cape who attended the EFF Plenum, one asserted that: "sifuna [we want] iwomen's league like iyouth league le. Ikhona mos [there is the] iStudent Command…" (2017). Another Black women leader disagreed for the need for an EFF Women's Command although the constitution of the party states that one needs to be established, she expressed that:

> You don't necessarily have to have a special wing for women…We don't have a man's forum, we are opening a women's forum for me *ingathi*[seems] we are against saying there's a difference between the two. U*yabona*[you see]? Let's drive iprojects. One, we will be spreading ourselves thin. (2017)

Therefore, women in the EFF have seen the gap in the party's gender discourse and work, although one seems to think that an establishment of a Women's League will solve the issue while another is against the idea stating that programs should be implemented instead. Within the ANC, April notes that "the change from a male centred movement to one that embraced women as a force in the movement stemmed from the activities of women themselves" (2012: 228). Therefore Black women within the movement need to place pressure within the party to ensure these gaps are filled.

Imagination is important to political or social activists who are trying to dismantle oppressive status quos. Imagination allows us to continue mobilising for a different lived reality. Personally, I continue to be a member of the EFF because I desire and imagine living in a different country. As noted by Desiree Lewis, African Feminism has demonstrated a commitment to cultivating imagination, linking 'imagining', 'thought', 'knowledge' and 'ideas' within the African Feminist political project (2007:19). Consequently Pereira argues that imagination and thought "is the capacity to go beyond what is given, to fantasise, to create new possibilities that link what is desired with what is known that will shape the content of knowledge production and its potential uses" (2002: 1).

Therefore for Black women in the EFF as well as the broader party, it is crucial that we also engage in a project of imagination:

- What might it mean for a political party in South Africa to foreground gendered oppression in their political and theoretical outlook?
- Can we imagine a political party as large as the EFF highlighting Black women's unpaid care work that keeps the South African economy functioning while demanding a political solution and compensation to this gendered form of exploitation?
- Can we also imagine seeing the political sphere outside heroic masculinity?
- Can we imagine building a movement that challenges and widens the notion of citizenship and political leadership to Black women, Black Queer bodies and gender nonconforming Black people?

As I argued in "From "uSobukwe uthi ayihlome to uNgoyi uthi ayihlome": The Sole Face of Our Political Discourse Cannot Continue to be a Man", even the Political songs that we

sing in protest mostly honour men in politics (2015). As we currently sing about Steve Biko, Nelson Mandela and Robert Sobuke in our political struggle songs, can we imagine singing about Charlotte Maxeke, Lilian Ngoyi, Simon Nkoli and Miriam Tlali in our EFF *Jazz Hour* albums? When we sing in honour of Andries Tatane who was murdered by police offers because he was protesting for water, can we imagine honouring the many lives of Black lesbians who have been murdered in our townships through song?

Noor Nieftagodien asked: "is there a place in the existing EFF culture for radical feminist politics?" (2015: 456). I must admit there are moments where I have felt despondent while imagining this political future within the EFF because a call to imagination and building a just future for all Black people cannot be carried out by those invested in a patriarchal the status quo. However, the Black women leaders that I was in conversation with in this research inquiry re-affirmed the possibility of this African Feminist imaginative project as well the feeling that there are still too few Black men in the movement who have chosen not to excuse or be in defence of patriarchy, and who are invested in unlearning, engagement in imagining ourselves a new, collectively.

As Gqola argues "it is not enough to limit critiques to our safe spaces" (2002: 2), Engaging in this research project and discovering gabs, silences and contradictions within my political party was a move away from critiquing the party within the organisation but through a larger inquiry that can be engaged with, debated towards the growth of our political project. As Paulo Freire states "freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly" (1970: 47). I felt that I needed to engage in this inquiry out of service and love; love for the EFF, love for the Black women in the EFF whose work to build the movement should never be erased and hope building a genuine political project for Black justice. This research report is the work of love, and the work of a quest for a path where we are all invested in honouring each other's subjectivity for our collective liberation. *Asijiki*

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Hosted Conversations:

1. Mandisa Mashego 13 January 2017, Johannesburg.

2. Naledi Chirwa 13 January 2017, Johannesburg.
3. Naledi Chirwa 20 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg
4. Nokulunga Primrose Sonti 20 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg
5. Anonymous Black woman leader from Western Cape, 21 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg
6. Anonymous Black woman leader from the Western Cape, 21 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg
7. Veronica Mente, 21 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg
8. Anonymous Black woman leader from the Tshwane, 22 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg
9. Leigh-Ann Mathys and Hlengiwe Hlophe 22 January at the EFF Plenum in Johannesburg